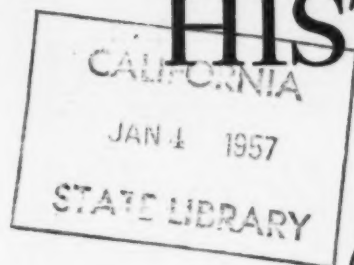


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# Civil War History

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## CIVIL WAR HISTORY

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## Introduction

"AN AMERIKAN LUVS TEW LAFF," wrote Josh Billings in 1868. During the decades preceding this badly spelled observation, Americans had proved it. For during a period of bitter controversy and ferocious warfare, Americans had managed to hold onto the sense of humor which is one of their finest attributes. Under my guest editorship, this issue of *Civil War History* is concerned with some of the expressions of that humor during a trying period.

The scholars contributing papers indicate how numerous and varied such expressions were. Three are concerned with literary *genres*. Larzer Ziff examines songs which were either unconsciously or consciously comical — hundreds of them from both the North and the South. Robert F. Lucid reaches his conclusions after reading more than a thousand anecdotes. Leon T. Dickinson bases his statements about pro- and anti-slavery novels upon the careful reading of thirty issued 1850-60, and the perusal of numerous others. One scholar, James T. Nardin, recounts the story of the controversy as it was represented in the humorous periodical *Vanity Fair*. Three scholars have seen what individual humorists had to say about slavery and the war — John Q. Reed, Artemus Ward; Anne M. Christie, Bill Arp; and Ellen Bremner, Orpheus C. Kerr.

The studies are intended to sample the humor rather than to treat it exhaustively. Other scholars might profitably make other approaches to the humor of the songs, the anecdotes, and the novels of the period and come up with enlightening discoveries. Others might look at additional humorous periodicals and find much of interest in them. And still others might profitably discuss individual humorists of the period here unexamined. For the humor of the Civil War period was extraordinarily prolific and varied.

It was also, we know, extraordinarily popular, some of it in its origins, much of it in its appeals. Some of the song lyrics and the anecdotes have

aspects of folklore, since they were composed by anonymous artists among the folk and orally transmitted. The type characters, such as the Yankees, the Virginians, the Dutchmen, and the negroes, not only in songs and anecdotes but also in novels and the writings of individual humorists, represented folk concepts in their characteristics and their actions. Much of the material, once it was in print, was widely circulated: often it was reprinted in newspapers in many parts of the country, and often it took the form of widely distributed pamphlets or books. Lincoln in the White House vividly illustrates how humorous writings appealed to at least one American of this trying period. He carried newspaper clippings of it about in his pocket until they were yellow and frayed, and books of the humor seem to have been (along with Shakespeare) his favorite night-time reading.

Because of its relatively humble origin and its great popularity, this wartime humor, as the studies which follow show, provides interesting insights into the thoughts and feelings of vast numbers of Americans during the wartime years.

WALTER BLAIR



*Larzer Ziff, who has been teaching in the extension division of the University of Chicago, has recently joined the English Department of the University of California in Berkeley. His chief work has been on John Cotton and Puritanism; but he has also carried on research in nineteenth century American literature.*

### *Civil War Humor:*

## Songs of the Civil War

LARZER ZIFF

BOTH THE UNION AND THE CONFEDERATE ARMIES went off to the war to the sound of music played by the bands and sung by the men, and during the conflict lyricists behind both lines worked heartily to supply soldier and civilian with timely songs. "Perhaps the favorite recreation of the Confederate Army was music,"<sup>1</sup> Bell Irvin Wiley observed, and when he surveyed the pastimes of Billy Yank, he added about the Northern army, "Ranking close to reading among camp diversions was music."<sup>2</sup> The favorites of soldiers North and South were, for the most part, the sentimental melodies in vogue when they left home. "Lorena," "Annie Laurie," "Juanita," "Lilly Dale," and "Sweet Evelina" were very popular, all of them concerned in one way or another with the subject of still another favorite, "The Girl I Left Behind Me." The songs of Stephen Foster were often sung, and although the Confederate picket replied to the Yankee picket's "Star Spangled Banner" by singing a chorus of "Dixie," when the voice across the Rappahanock was raised in "Home Sweet Home"<sup>3</sup> he was more apt to harmonize than to compete.

Although new lyrics understandably outstripped new melodies during the course of the war, mid-century America's equivalent of Tin Pan Alley experienced a boom. This was especially so in the South. The pre-war

<sup>1</sup> Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1943), p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1952), p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> Henry M. Wharton, (Editor) *War Songs and Poems of the Southern Confederacy 1861-1865* (Philadelphia: 1904), p. 139, note.

sheet-music industry, like so many other industries, had been located principally in the North and with secession a fact, Southern patriots and profiteers rushed in to fill the void.<sup>4</sup> But, of course, the singer of songs at the front and the singer of songs at home were more likely to make up words to a familiar tune than they were to compose new airs.

The professional melody makers did not rely solely upon publishing houses to disseminate their music among the people but were dependent upon "song-plugging" just as are their twentieth-century heirs. For over a year, Miss Sallie Partington, the prima-donna of the Confederacy, who filled the New Richmond Theater nightly for her performance in the *Virginia Cavalier*, popularized "The Southern Soldier Boy,"<sup>5</sup> by singing the song at every performance. Harry Macarthy, "the Arkansas comedian," contributed greatly to the popularity of his own compositions by singing them at concerts. It was frequently at such professional performances that the troops picked up new songs which they later sang and thus brought to whatever regions the fortunes of war located them in. If a lyricist had the bad fortune to be isolated by a blockade, he at least had the consolation of a captive audience eager for diversion. This accounts for the disproportionate number of topical songs devoted to siege-blockades rather than to actual battles. The Confederate efforts to lift the blockade at Galveston, for instance, were celebrated in great detail in "The Horse Marines at Galveston," chronicled in a pompous patriotic vein in "The Battle of Galveston," and intoned to the strains of "Auld Lang Syne," in "Bombardment and Battle of Galveston."<sup>6</sup>

The songs popular prior to and during the Civil War and those composed when the conflict was raging can be grouped into three loose categories — sentimental, patriotic, and light-hearted. Songs in the first of these now have the appeal of unconscious humor; those in the second made frequent use of humor; and songs in the third were humorous in intent. Although the ensuing discussion concerns itself with humor under each of the categories, its aim also is to learn what the songs reflect about their singers and to appreciate the feelings the songs seem to have invoked as well as the response they now receive. No pretense of judging the literary merit of the songs is made. The aesthetic approach would be an unnecessarily onerous one to a body of literature never worthy of being so considered.

<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Harwell, *Confederate Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950).

<sup>5</sup> W. L. Fagan, (Editor) *Southern War Songs* (New York: M. T. Richardson & Co., 1890), p. 69, note. Of the anthologies of Southern songs examined, this volume appears to have the most accurate texts and the most helpful indexes. Whenever possible, therefore, songs cited are located in this volume in preference to the many other printings in which they may be found.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 185, 191.



## I

Weeping sad and lonely  
 Sighs and tears how vain,  
 When this cruel war is over,  
 Pray that we meet again.

So runs the chorus of "When This Cruel War Is Over,"<sup>7</sup> the lachrymose melody popular on both sides during the Civil War. Just as the soldier had carried sentimental favorites into the conflict, so a good proportion of his repertoire directly inspired by the war was sentimental. A frequent corollary of a popular sentimental song was a companion piece sung to the same tune in response to it. Thus, an answer to "When This Cruel War Is Over" was written, "I Remember the Hour When Sadly We Parted,"<sup>8</sup> with the chorus:

Then weep not, love, oh! weep not,  
 Think not our hopes are vain,  
 For when this fatal war is over  
 We will surely meet again.

"All Quiet Along the Potomac" vied with "When This Cruel War Is Over" for the position of the most popular sentimental war piece. Not only was it a favorite with both Blue and Gray, but also it raised a controversy over the identity and allegiance of its author, each side bringing forth candidates.<sup>9</sup>

Families, especially mothers, were dolorously recalled in the songs of the soldiers as frequently as were sweethearts:

Dear mother I must bid adieu  
 And to the war must go;  
 Yes, mother I must part with you  
 And meet the Rebel foe.

So runs one sample, with the mother in the second verse urging her blue-clad boy to stay but, recovering her patriotism by the third verse, insisting that he not return "Until the war is o'er."<sup>10</sup> The volunteer's mother woefully sang, "He is my boy, my only boy! / His father died long years gone by,"<sup>11</sup> but it was her lad who sang the classic of this genre, "Just Before the Battle, Mother."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Wharton, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

<sup>8</sup> Kate E. Staton, (Editor) *Old Southern Songs of the Period of the Confederacy. The Dixie Trophy Collection* (New York: S. French, 1926), p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Harwell, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>10</sup> *Lyrics of the War*, second number (Philadelphia: D. Scattergood, [1864]), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> "The Volunteer's Mother," *Lyrics of the War* (Philadelphia: 1864), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Jeanne Robert Foster, "Songs of the War Days," *Photographic History of the Civil War* (New York: Review of Reviews, 1911), IX, p. 350.

Beneath the lugubriously sweetened surface of the sentimental song were the two great themes of love and death: love of the family and sweetheart for the soldier who went off to fight, and love of the soldier for his family and sweetheart; death in battle among comrades and anonymous death in alien fields. A popular combination of these themes was the death of the drummer-boy who symbolized the soldier in his attire and duties but retained the role of an innocent child. Francis O. Ticknor's "Little Giffin" represents the acme of such songs: it tells of the wounded drummer boy near death who rallies when he hears that "Johnston's pressed at the front" and hurries off never to be heard from again.<sup>13</sup> When "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh" died, "each brave man knelt and cried."<sup>14</sup> The popularity of such a theme was also indicated by the frequent singing, especially in Confederate homes, of the duet, "What Are the Wild Waves Saying?"<sup>15</sup> which is based on the question debated between Paul and Florence in Dickens' *Dombey and Son*.

Harry Macarthy, an indefatigable contributor to Confederate song literature in the early years of the war, attained great success in the realm of sentiment. One of his best known works was "The Volunteer: Or It Is My Country's Call"<sup>16</sup> which successfully combined for its audience the heart-rending motif, "I leave my home and thee, dear, with sorrow at my heart," with the stiff-upper-lipped patriotism of the chorus:

Then weep not, dearest, weep not, if in the cause I fall;  
Oh, weep not, dearest, weep not, it is my country's call.

The most painful and least interesting of all Civil War songs to read today, the sentimental songs were undoubtedly the single most cherished group in their day. For the most part they recognized no boundaries. The drummer's gray could be changed to blue with blithe disregard of whatever assonance might have been intended. If a sentimental song was regional in its popularity, this was more likely the result of its not having been heard much in another area rather than of its containing observations appropriate only to one side.

The humor of the sentimental songs is, of course, unconscious. The smiles they afford the contemporary reader are of the same class as smiles directed at high-button shoes, snuff boxes, and wig-blocks. Just as no one questions the need for foot covering although he is amused at high-button shoes, so no one should question the sincerity of feeling which sought expression in the high-flown words of the sentimental song.

<sup>13</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-30.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>15</sup> Staton, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

Huck Finn tells us that Emmeline Grangerford "didn't ever have to stop to think" when she was working on a sentimental opus. Whereas this reflects somewhat critically on the fashion in which the lamented girl was raised and amuses the reader as it confused Huck, nevertheless, Emmeline grew up in a harsh environment for all the relative wealth of the Grangerford family. Injury or sudden death at the hands of man or beast was not uncommon; Dr. Gunn's *Family Medicine*, "which told you all about what to do if a body was sick or dead," shared the table with a volume of sentimental poetry. And Emmeline went to the graveyard at the age of fifteen. Similarly, the singers of the Civil War sentimental song lived in a time when unexpected disasters were to be expected. To the extent that the grim facts — broken homes, orphaned children, crippled bodies — were close, the forms in which the facts were presented to the popular imagination in songs were lofty and unreal. They comforted by ennobling, albeit artificially. An age which has abandoned such patterns of comfort laughs at the artificiality.

## II

Close behind the sentimental song in popularity was the song of patriotism. The themes of love for one's homeland and anger at the enemy's pretensions were, in a great many instances, voiced in humorous words by the song-writers. In general, of course, the North had a considerable start on the South here, since it was undisputed possessor of "The Star Spangled Banner," "America," and "The Red, White, and Blue"; but Southern rhymers did not hesitate to appropriate the melodies and there were numerous Southern versions of them. Similarly, the "Marseillaise," a well known march in French-speaking Louisiana, was soon fitted up with Confederate verses and enjoyed a far greater success than it did when Northern hack writers appropriated it.<sup>17</sup>

In the field of patriotic marching songs, however, no Confederate tune came near equalling the success of "Dixie." It was sung with the words supplied for it by Northern minstrel man Dan Emmett as well as in countless other versions. When a Confederate soldier attempted to put his mind to versifying, the rhythm to which he attempted to fit his words was most often that of "Dixie," and in many instances the words were humorous. The version which in popularity most closely rivalled that of Emmett's original "I wish I was in de land o' cotton" was that of Albert Pike, the solemn ditty which began "Southrons, hear your country call you!"<sup>18</sup> But other words fitted to the tune ranged from "Pork and cab-

<sup>17</sup> "Southern Marseillaise," *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> "Dixie," *ibid.*, p. 238.

bage in de pot, / It goes in cold and comes out hot," to "Abe Lincoln tore through Baltimore, / In a baggage car with fastened door."<sup>19</sup>

Seldom did one story line run through the songs sung to "Dixie." A couplet seized on some aspect of the war, gave way to the chorus, and then another couplet, often unconnected with the whole save in its general enthusiasm, was flung out. Thus, the song about Lincoln did not linger long on his alleged cowardice but went on to other aspects of the war:

Abe's proclamation in a twinkle,  
Stirred up the blood of Rip Van Winkle;  
Fight away, fight away, fight away for Dixie's land.  
Jeff Davis's answer was short and curt:  
"Fort Sumter's taken, and nobody's hurt!"  
Fight away, etc.

One couplet ran, "We have no ships, we have no navies, / But mighty faith in the great Jeff Davis;" while another boasted, "Brave old Missouri shall be ours, / Despite Abe Lincoln's Northern powers." The humor of the song is that derived from a favorite patriotic topic in the South during the early days of the war: the disparity between the respective sizes of the combating powers and the inverse ratio of success. Southerners enjoyed playing David to the Union's Goliath.

Harry Macarthy appeared on the stage with a patriotic song almost as soon as the state of South Carolina provided him with the subject, "The Bonnie Blue Flag."<sup>20</sup> Its early appearance and its identification with one of the first symbols of the Confederacy assured its Southern popularity. James Ryder Randall's "Maryland, My Maryland" seemed on its way to becoming a middling success when sung to the tune of "Ma Normandie," but when a Baltimore lady discovered that with the insertion of an additional "My Maryland" in the refrain it fitted perfectly with the music of "Oh, Tannenbaum," its popularity increased rapidly until it was second only to "Dixie."<sup>21</sup>

Macarthy's melody for "The Bonnie Blue Flag" became the setting for the home-front Confederate favorite "The Homespun Dress."<sup>22</sup> In it, the Southern girl, with some felicitous touches of humor, pointed to her apparel as testimony of her patriotism:

The homespun dress is plain, I know  
My hat's palmetto, too;  
But then it shows what Southern girls  
For Southern rights will do.

<sup>19</sup> "Dixie's Land," and "The Song of the Exile," *ibid.*, pp. 36, 245.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Harwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>22</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 81.



Southern ladies were loyal in their selection of husbands also:

If ever I consent to be married,  
And who would refuse a good mate?  
The man whom I give my hand to,  
Must believe in the rights of the State.

We girls are all for a Union  
Where a marked distinction is laid  
Between the rights of the mistress  
And those of the kinky-haired maid.<sup>23</sup>

The humor in many of the home-front patriotic songs is derived from the straight-faced joining of routine daily matters to inflated patriotic ends. Even the pedestrian task of knitting became an object of such lofty regard that "stockings" was an unmentionably base word:

Knitting for the soldiers!  
Panoply for feet —  
Onward, bound to victory!  
Rushing in retreat!<sup>24</sup>

The patriotic songs of both sides laid claim to the common heritage as justification and inspiration for the conflict at hand. The "Southern War-Cry"<sup>25</sup> called on the countrymen of Washington and Jefferson and the soldiers who had been led by Old Hickory, made reference to the Cowpens and Yorktown, and concluded by pointing to Southern valor at Monterey and Buena Vista. The Northern songster was quick to remember Faneuil Hall, Independence Hall, and the Boston Tea Party. Neither was he hesitant to claim relationship to Washington, Jefferson, and Jackson although one S. S. Steele pushed matters to the verge in his "The Gallant Yankee General,"<sup>26</sup> wherein he sang a Yankee song made by a Yankee pate about a Yankee general from a Yankee state. Even the most devoted Union man must have received a turn when the Yankee state was revealed as Virginia and the Yankee general was identified as Washington. Steele's point was that Washington and Virginia fought for the same thing that the North was now fighting for, freedom. Let him who would laugh at a Northerner's references to Washington as "our bold Virginia boy" who "stood up for his Yankee land." While many Northern song-writers were willing to go along with Steele's general contention, few others were willing to expose themselves to ridicule by kidnapping the Southern patriots through attaching the epithet "Yankee" to their names.

<sup>23</sup> "A Southern Song," *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> "Knitting for the Soldiers," *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> *Songs for the Union* (Philadelphia: A. Winch, [1861]), p. 66.

There was no lack on either side of songs which called men from hills, valleys, and every other possible geographical formation. The Southern lyricist, of course, had greater success in tucking the names of all the states in his confederation into one song than did his Northern counterpart, but the Northerner compensated for this by being able to call his troops from the south as well as the north, east, and west, whereas the Southerner had to be content with three-fourths of the compass in his rallying songs. H. M. Wharton, an editor of Southern war songs, pointed this up when he told of the Alabama minister preaching a sermon:

He cried out . . . "The Scriptures tell us that many shall come from the East, and many shall come from the West, and many shall come from the South," and then pausing, his gray hair floating in the breeze, his cheeks wet with tears, he lifted both hands to Heaven, and closing his eyes said, in a low, hardly audible voice, and "perhaps a very few may come from the North."<sup>27</sup>

Confederate patriotic songs not only incited their listeners to loyalty and victory but were lavish in suggesting the glorious future that was in store for the new nation:

While the Gulf States raise the Cotton, the others grain and pork,  
North and South Carolina's factories will do the finer work;  
For the deep and flowing waterfalls that course along our hills,  
Are "just the things" for washing sheep and driving cotton mills.<sup>28</sup>

The humor in this song stems from its optimistic exaggeration and is characteristic of a group of patriotic songs which were understandably based on unreasoning loyalty rather than on a consideration of the facts.

Singers on both sides put forth their version of the grounds for the conflict, Northern songs proclaiming the emancipation of the slave, Southern songs denouncing an unwarranted invasion of states' rights. The "Song of the Southern Soldier" was broadly satirical about the hypocrisy of the Union's claims:

Their parsons will open their sanctified jaws,  
And cant of our slave-growing sin, sir;  
They pocket the *profits*, while preaching the laws,  
And manage our cotton to spin, sir.  
Their incomes are nice, on our sugar and rice,  
Though against it the hypocrites write, sir;  
Now our dander is up, and they'll soon smell a mice,  
If we once get them into a fight, sir.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Wharton, *op. cit.*, p. 92, note.

<sup>28</sup> "Song for the South," Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.



And at least one Union song was frank to acknowledge that the boy in blue hoped to gain materially from the conflict:

So come along, come along! Uncle Sam can pay;  
Right down to Dixie's land — we shall find the way;  
Sugar-lands, cotton-lands, ready for your arms!  
Dixie's land is rich enough to treat us all to farms!<sup>30</sup>

The humor here is that of the good-natured rogue. He thinks he is being funny when he light-heartedly compares the war to a commercial proposition:

We're a-going into business, boys, I'd have you understand,  
For there never was so good a time to speculate in land.

He is a knave whose thievery is justified by the terms of war, and he is not over-cautious in concealing the fact:

As for niggers, we'll *apprentice* them to till for us the land,  
And if "massa" comes to catch 'em we'll declare 'em *contraband*.

The italics are the song-writer's; "apprentice" is a euphemism for a slave working for a Northerner so far as this Pistol of the Union forces is concerned.

Although the writers of patriotic songs were often pompous and stuffy, the American sense of humor asserted itself with surprising frequency. For instance, a simile could slip in after serious words to undermine the pretension:

Our bugle had roused up the camp,  
The heavens looked dismal and dirty,  
And the earth looked unpleasant and damp,  
As a bean on the wrong side of thirty.<sup>31</sup>

Fun was made of the often proclaimed ends of the conflict by translating them into dollars and cents or (perhaps unconsciously) by juxtaposing them with the most pedestrian matters, thereby ridiculing the important in an attempt to elevate the routine. Patriotism was a theme capable of a great deal of inflation, and when full blown was both comical in its bloated state and comical when exploded.

### III

The songs of the Civil War which were intended primarily to be humorous were, for the most part, songs of invective. One may conjecture

<sup>30</sup> "Dixie's Farms," *Beadle's Dime Union Song Book* (New York: Beadle & Co., 1861), p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> "Short Rations: Or The Corn-Fed Army," Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 322.



that a moderating post-war spirit has kept the bitterest of these songs from manuscript and print because, all things considered, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, as examples, are quite mildly handled in the published literature. The standard Confederate taunts centered around Lincoln's frustration in finding suitable commanders, his alleged reliance upon alcohol to buoy him up, and his physical appearance. Northerners belabored Jefferson Davis as a small man with ridiculously outsized ambitions and threatened him with death by the noose.

When he was in a satiric vein the Confederate soldier shortened Yankee Doodle to Doole and so referred to his opponent. He also made frequent use of the tune of "Yankee Doodle" as a setting for his jibes. One version ran:

Yankee Doodle had a mind  
To whip the Southern traitors,  
Because they didn't choose to live  
On codfish and potatoes.<sup>32</sup>

To the tune of "Oh, Susanna," he sang of a location dear to the heart of all Southerners:

I come from old Manassas, with a pocket full of fun —  
I killed forty Yankees with a single-barrelled gun;  
It don't make niff-a-stifference to neither you or I,  
Big Yankee, little Yankee, all run or die.<sup>33</sup>

Time and again the Confederate soldier took to song to remind his opponent of the Battle of Bull Run.<sup>34</sup>

Next to Bull Run, the favorite Southern battle topic for a humorous song was the unsuccessful campaigns against Richmond. "Richmond Is A Hard Road To Travel,"<sup>35</sup> dedicated to General Burnside, is a rollicking chronicle of the fate of his predecessors.

The Union soldier's familiar name for his opponent in song was "Secesh," and he sang to Secesh to warn him of his dire end and to alert him to the merits of the Enfield gun. He also derived amusement from caricaturing Southern gentry. He sang of the South Carolina gentleman who swaggers, takes his whisky straight, wears ruffles, chews and spits tobacco by the pound, takes to euchre kindly, and is always in debt:

But if a Northern creditor asks him his bill to heed,  
This honorable gentleman instantly draws two bowie-knives and a pistol,

<sup>32</sup> "Another Yankee Doodle," *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> "Flight of Doodles," *ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 38 and Frank Moore, (Editor) *Rebel Rhymes and Rhapsodies* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1864), pp. 70, 77, 91.

<sup>35</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

dons a blue cockade, and declares that in consequence of the repeated aggression of the North, and its gross violations of the Constitution, he feels that it would utterly degrade him to pay any debt whatever, and that in fact he has at last determined to SECEDE.

This South-Carolina gentleman, one of the present time.<sup>36</sup>

This same high and mighty gentleman, the song coarsely alleges, has negro blood as the result of ancestral indiscretions.

In the South there were many hero-songs, lyrics which sang the praise of outstanding or colorful commanders. Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, and P.G.T. Beauregard were frequently sung about, and the names of Magruder, Stuart, and Johnston were also common subjects of song. One of the chief reasons there was a relative shortage of such songs in the North was, of course, that until late in the war there was a relative shortage of dashing leaders. The Northerners did have some songs about their leaders, but the names Scott, McClellan, Pope, and Fremont faded from Northern minds and lips as hopes for a successful thrust in the direction of Richmond faded from Northern minds. In fact, the names of the early Northern generals were more frequently heard in satirical comments appropriate for the lips of Confederate soldiers:

Old Lincoln had put in his very best man —  
It was old General Scott who led in his clan —  
But in facing Jeff Davis he couldn't shine,  
For we captured his cakes, his brandies, and wine,

McClellan was the next man put in the field,  
With brass-hilted sword and a sole-leather shield;  
He boasted quite loudly the Rebels he'd whip —  
But you see, my dear friends, he's not done it yet

There were Banks, Shields, and Fremont, big generals all,  
While skirmishing 'round ran afoul of "Stonewall!"<sup>37</sup>

But while, in general, the Confederate enlisted man was happy to sing of his own leader in laudatory terms, at least one song contains a hint that he was not delighted with the adulation Southern society lavished upon its handsome holders of commissions. The verses of "The Officers of Dixie"<sup>38</sup> complained:

<sup>36</sup> "South-Caroline Gentleman," *Loyal Publication Society*, New York, Pamphlet No. 49, *Soldiers and Sailors' Patriotic Songs* (New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1864), p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> "Hard Times," Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

Swelling 'round with gold lace plenty,  
 See the gay "brass button" gentry;  
 Solomon in all his splendors  
 Was scarce arrayed like these "defenders."

The song goes on to grumble about the preference given the "bars" in steamboats and trains, the omission of enlisted men's names from party invitation lists, the exaltation of an officer's death and the anonymity of a private's end, and the ladies' romantic preference for officers. In its bitter detail "The Officers of Dixie" is more than a passing joke. It offers some grounds for the inference that the predominance of hero-songs in the South as compared with the North may have been rooted in the social order and may not have been merely the result of a lack of dashing Union generals. This is strengthened by the fact that even relatively minor Confederate leaders had their songs whereas Union officers of greater prominence did not.

As "The Officers of Dixie" indicates, the soldiers had a great deal of spleen reserved for venting on those of their own nationalistic persuasion. "The Navasoto Volunteers"<sup>39</sup> begins by asking for recruits to help fight Lincoln but closes with sarcasm concerning the patriot who pleads illness, the lawyer who insists on promotion, the merchant who is too busy with inflated profits, and the planter who stays at home to keep an eye on his interests. "The Reason Why"<sup>40</sup> is a Northern song bubbling with indignation at the contractors who are the alleged source of delaying a climactic southward thrust, and "Short Rations"<sup>41</sup> with its cry of "com-missaries — commiseratel" is a Southern hit at army provisioners. The latter song also deals satirically with the patriotic rhetoric used to encourage the underfed soldier:

Tell me not of the Lacedaemonian,  
 Of his black broth and savage demeanor,  
 We keep up a fare less Plutonian,  
 Yet I'd swear our corn coffee is meaner!  
 Tell me nothing of ancients and strangers,  
 For, on seeing our Southern-bred Catos,  
 I have laughed at old Marion's Rangers,  
 Who feasted on roasted potatoes!

The laugh heard in Civil War songs turned inward as well as outward.  
 A class of songs which were almost a trademark of the Union soldier

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Moore, (Editor) *Personal and Political Ballads* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1864), p. 199.

<sup>41</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

reflected a Northern attitude which was satirically attacked by Southern singers. These were the religious songs — "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" is a prime example — which contained the notion, acidly received in the South, that the Northern cause was sanctioned by the Bible and advanced by an army of militant saints. Reference was made, it will be remembered, to a Confederate song which spoke of Northern hypocrisy in terms of the "sancitized jaws" of the parson. The epithet masked behind such verses came to the fore in another secessionist song. Henry St. George Tucker in "The Southern Cross,"<sup>42</sup> written in the meter of "The Star Spangled Banner," made bitter mention of what he took to be at the root of Northern Hypocrisy:

How peaceful and blest was America's soil,  
Til betrayed by the guile of the Puritan demon,  
Which lurks under virtue, and springs from its coil  
To fasten its fangs in the life-blood of freemen.

A Union song joyfully accepted the epithet and joined it with the personification of cotton as king to hit an historical note:

Though Cotton be of kingly stock,  
Yet royal heads may reach the block;  
The Puritan taught it once in pain,  
His sons shall teach it once again.<sup>43</sup>

Although it is not mentioned in so many words, the Northern suspicion that dislike for his religious claims is intertwined with aristocratic pretension comes to the surface in the following couplet:

And as for those poor Southern ducks, Jeff Davis and his peers,  
We'll show them that our Pilgrim stock are good as Cavaliers.<sup>44</sup>

In the interchange of invective there lurks an image of the English Civil War, of Southern lands settled by Church of England men and Cavaliers, of Northern lands settled by Puritans and freedmen.

Northern pride in the Puritan label was matched by Southern pride in the name "rebel." To the tune of "Yankee Doodle," the Southerner sang:

Rebel is a sacred name;  
Traitor, too, is glorious;  
By such names our fathers fought —  
By them were victorious.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> "Northmen, Come Out!", Frank Moore, (Editor) *Lyrics of Loyalty* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1884), p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> "Dixie's Farms," *Beadle's Dime Union Song Book*, p. 47.

<sup>45</sup> "Rebel is a Sacred Name," Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

The singer of "A Southern Paean"<sup>46</sup> was even more blunt:

But a truce to all questions of reason,  
Fort Sumter is gloriously won.  
And who cares a jot for the treason,  
If the black-hearted North is undone?

Not all of the designedly humorous songs were acid, however. There were laughs at the joys of camp life in "Goober Peas"<sup>47</sup> and smiles at the strange bedfellows made by war in the regional and fighting unit songs. One of the most amusing songs in the latter group is that of the German soldier, "I Goes To Fight Mit Sigel."<sup>48</sup> The second verse runs:

Where I comes from der Deutsche Countree,  
I vorks sometimes at baking;  
Den I keeps a lager beer saloon,  
Und den I goes shoe making;  
But now I was a sojer been  
To save der Yankee Eagle;  
To schlauch dem tam secession volks,  
I'm going to fight mit Sigel.

There were other national strains in the Union army, and the Confederates found the mixture amusing enough to poke fun at it in their songs:

You know the Federal General Banks  
Who came through Louisiana with his forty thousand Yanks;  
His object was to execute the Abolition law,  
With as mongrel a horde of soldiers as creation ever saw;  
There were Irish and English, and Spanish and Dutch,  
And negroes and Yankees, and many more such,  
All dress'd out in blue coats and fine filagree —  
But such a skedaddle you never did see!<sup>49</sup>

Dialect songs, or at least attempts at them, were rife on both sides. The Confederates sang a "Song of Hooker's Picket"<sup>50</sup> in which at least as much fun was received from imitating the Yankee's twang as from reporting his discomfort bogged down in Southern mud:

Darn Ole Abe and Ole Jeff Dave!  
Darn the day I 'listed!  
When I came down to this 'ere town,  
Jerushy! how I missed it.

<sup>46</sup> *Personal and Political Ballads*, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>49</sup> "Banks Skedaddle," Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

And Southern vernacular comes to the fore in the refrain of "Flight of Doodles:"<sup>51</sup>

Oh! it don't make a niff-a-stiffence to neither you nor I,  
Florida's death on Yankees; root, hog, or die.

The Northerner, too, sang out in native dialect:

How are you all? Say am you well?  
I'm here, and that's no pity;  
I work for Uncle Sam-u-el,  
And guess I'll sing a ditty.

I s'pose you've read in history some,  
How we flogged the British  
When their big armies here did come,  
In hopes to make us skittish.  
Columbia's sons then thought it fun,  
And larnt them all a lesson,  
Led on by General Washington,  
We gave the foe a dressin'.<sup>52</sup>

The street-corner Southern catchwords like "Root, hog, or die" and "Mister, here's your mule," were matched in song by the Northerners' "Rather too much for a shilling" and "Like a thousand of brick."

But the most popular dialect by far was that of the negro. It was heard in Stephen Foster's songs as well as in the spirituals which both armies took up, and it was also heard in camp and battle songs. One of the most famous negro dialect songs was one which the Union called "The Year of Jubilee"<sup>53</sup> and the Confederacy called "The Contraband."<sup>54</sup> In it a slave sings of his master who has run off because the "Lincum" gunboats are on their way, and then goes on to tell of how he and the other slaves have moved into massa's parlor. In spite of what could have been sensitive subject-matter for the South, it was popular with both forces, the Northerners claiming it was the song of the negro troops that occupied Richmond, the Southerners reporting it was popular in Vicksburg during the siege.

In Georgetown, South Carolina, several negroes were jailed for singing the spiritual "My Father How Long?"<sup>55</sup> The refrain goes:

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>52</sup> "The Boys of Uncle Samu'l," *Songs for the Union*, p. 31.

<sup>53</sup> George Cary Eggleston, (Editor) *American War Ballads and Lyrics* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), II, p. 200.

<sup>54</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>55</sup> Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

And it won't be long,  
And it won't be long,  
And it won't be long,  
When de Lord will call us home.

In 1861 the words of many a spiritual were susceptible of a double meaning which encouraged a sly sort of humor in slave songs.

Off-color songs, one may be sure, were well sung by both armies. But as Bell Irvin Wiley tells us, "Indeed, there is no more elusive phase of Civil War history than the seamy side,"<sup>56</sup> and the connoisseur of ribald music must satisfy himself, in this period, with references to his subject in letters rather than with a body of existing materials.

## V

It is worth while, after categorizing humor in the songs of the Civil War, to consider for a moment the extent to which the songs are topical. It may quickly be observed that the songs of the Civil War are not an accurate index of the progress of events. As the spirits of the North rose and the hopes of the South faded, one might conjecture that Confederate songs became more nostalgic while Union songs became more elated, but there is no outstanding evidence to support this. The songs a people sing are not a literal chronicle of the particular incidents of their day; rather, they are a reflection of their general attitudes and sentiments, and even this within limitations. While martyrdom, sudden death, home, and mourning families were fit topics for the lyricist to sentimentalize over, the literal slaughter of the battlefield did not find its way into song. For instance, no song was sung of the Battle of Gettysburg by Northerner or Southerner so far as this study could reveal. It was one thing to sing of a bold dash at night, it was another to catalogue the grim facts.

One cannot, then, follow the events of the Civil War through its song literature, but there were notable incidents which furnished topics for humor in songs. As was noted earlier, a number of songs were developed to combat the monotony of a siege. The Vicksburg songs, as examples, are remarkable in their good-natured self-criticism. "The Contraband" which tells of fleeing slave owners has already been mentioned. Another favorite was "Do They Miss Me In the Trenches?"<sup>57</sup> It is a parody of the sentimental standard "Do They Miss Me At Home?" wherein the singer, a deserter, reminisces in a mock maudlin vein about those he has left to do the fighting while he "crawfished" out of sight. The second verse says:

<sup>56</sup> Wiley, *Billy Yank*, p. 168.

<sup>57</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 129.



I often get up in the trenches,  
 When some Yank is near out of sight,  
 And fire a round or two at him,  
 To make the boys think I will fight;  
 But when the Feds commence shelling,  
 I run to my hole down the hill —  
 I'll swear my legs never would stay there,  
 Altho' all may stay there that will.

Good natured as the Vicksburg songs are, however, in their recognition of fleeing slave owners and cowardly soldiers they carry a realization that the end of the war has begun.

Union soldiers had no such success as Bull Run to sing happily about early in the war. For the most part, they fell back upon Bunker Hill, Lexington and Concord as symbols of Yankee intrepidity, but the evocation of the past was grim work. When their early songs are happy, they reflect a more naive attitude than do the songs of the Southerners. The Zouaves must have sung different words after they had faced fire than the words which they sang as they gathered:

And naught but mirth and jollity  
 In every tent was seen  
 And thus we pass the pleasant nights,  
 Awaiting for the foe.<sup>58</sup>

The Northern girl who sang about her lover, "And in Richmond with Burnside, he'll be afore long,"<sup>59</sup> also affords a smile to the modern reader.

A current event which was a favorite topic of satiric doggerel rhyming North and South was the diplomatic battle to win England and the "Trent Affair" connected with it. Confederate singers humorously wooed Britain to the tune of "John Anderson, My Jo John:"

O, Johnny Bull, my Jo John! let's take the field together,  
 And hunt the Yankee Doodles home, in spite of wind and weather,  
 And ere a twelve-month roll around, to Boston we will go,  
 And eat our Christmas dinner there, O, Johnny Bull, my Jo!<sup>60</sup>

Should this tune fail they were ready to be more blunt about the matter. To the tune of "Dixie," a song called "De Cotton Down In Dixie"<sup>61</sup> told of how the English were meeting night and day to solve the cotton shortage:

<sup>58</sup> "The Zouaves' Song," *Beadle's Dime Union Song Book*, p. 42.

<sup>59</sup> "My Love He Is a Zou-zu," *Beadle's Dime Union Song Book No. 2* (New York: Beadle & Co., 1861), p. 26.

<sup>60</sup> "O, Johnny Bull, My Jo, John," Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.



Some say, "Make muslin widout cotton,"  
Others, "O no 'twill be too rotten;"

For it will take six million bales  
For de mills ob England, Scotland, Wales.

The song goes on to remind the English of the horse in the old man's song who learned to live without hay or corn but died the same day.

The Union versifier found words to "John Anderson" also:

John Bull, Esquire, my jo John,  
Hear this my language plain:  
I never smote you unprovoked,  
I never smote in vain.  
If you want peace, peace let it be!  
If war, be pleased to know,  
Shots in my locker yet remain,  
John Bull, Esquire, my jo!<sup>62</sup>

And he also was kept busy replying to Canadian words such as those set to "Yankee Doodle," which taunted him about Bull Run and about the fact that Union troops were doing so badly the press couldn't be mailed because of the awful news it contained. He retorted by pointing out that John Bull's tea speculations went bad some time ago and that his cotton trade was going the same way.<sup>63</sup>

When enthusiasm for the crew of the "San Jacinto" for their arrest of Mason and Slidell swept over the North, Southerners found consolation in the deed of Miss Slidell, the Commissioner's daughter, who reportedly slapped a Union officer. They sang to her as "The Gallant Girl That Smote The Dastard Tory, Oh!"<sup>64</sup> But, as has been said, for the most part the song literature was far in lag of current events when concerned with them at all, and consequently particular events were subjects of humor only in the material they provided with which to taunt the opposition.

As the war drew to a close, if there was little malice in the Confederate songs which accepted the end neither was there any apology. The Confederate maid who a few years ago had insisted upon marrying a man who believed in the rights of the state remained firm and prepared in song to face a life of spinsterhood. Although the conquering soldier proposed, she could not kiss the hand that smote her country:

<sup>62</sup> "A New Song To An Old Tune," *Personal and Political Ballads*, p. 274.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>64</sup> Fagan, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

The girls who lov'd the boys in gray — the girls to country true,  
May ne'er in wedlock give their hands to those who wore the blue.<sup>65</sup>

An outstanding exception to the relatively bitter free post-war Southern song is the marvelously unforgiving, "I'm a Good Old Rebel,"<sup>66</sup> which sings in part:

O, I'm a good old rebel,  
Now that's just what I am,  
For this "Fair Land of Freedom"  
I do not care a damn;  
I'm glad I fit against it,  
I only wish we'd won,  
And I don't want no pardon  
For anything I done.

I can't take up my musket  
And fight 'em now no more  
But I ain't a-going to love 'em,  
Now that is sartin' sure;  
And I don't want no pardon,  
For what I was and am,  
I won't be reconstructed,  
And I don't care a damn.

On both sides, nostalgia for the war and those killed in battle was conveyed through the singing of songs about faded jackets of gray and blue, by lyrics about decorating the graves, and by verses such as "Tenting Tonight," evocative of campaigning days. During the war, the Loyal Publication Society had been tireless in disseminating songs and other literature throughout the North in order to preserve "the integrity of the Nation, by counteracting the efforts of the advocates of a disgraceful and disintegrating Peace." But with peace its efforts were over and it remained for interested editors, publishers, and students to gather the Union songs. In the South, however, the songs that were sung were understandably more cherished mementoes since they were poignant remembrances of not only a great war but also of a well-loved order which would never be again. The efforts to save them from oblivion, therefore, have been more organized than those in the North. The United Daughters of the Confederacy have been particularly zealous in this cause.

## VI

The songs sung during the Civil War were not only war songs, they

<sup>65</sup> "True to the Gray," *ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

were songs of nineteenth-century America. Popular song lyrics, like popular literature, were marked, for the most part, by a cloying sentimentalism. Like the diction of most popular literature, their diction was generally high flown and stilted. In parallel with other forms of literature again, the songs broke through archaic phrases and falsified feelings most successfully when they lapsed into the vernacular of the singer and concerned themselves with everyday topics.

The words of a song, of course, are dependent upon the music for success. Many times, if the air is pleasing, words which have no particular appeal or pertinence for the singer will also be popular. Less often is the reverse the case. Moreover, songs are more tied to details extraneous to their actual content than are other forms of literature. A poem carries within itself the meanings it conveys and the feelings it provokes. But the popular song is as dependent for its success upon the disposition of the listener and the occasion on which he hears or sings it as it is on actual content, probably more so. Thousands of people who had never been north of South Carolina sang feelingly of "Lorena," telling her that "The snow is on the grass again." The emotions such words called up were totally extraneous to the words which conveyed them.

Thus, not only are the words of songs a poor literal record of an era; they are also likely to be misleading as to the meaning they held for those who sang them. But although the songs of the Civil War are untrustworthy guides to specific attitudes they are highly reliable guides to the sentiments and anxieties among which the events of the war took place. Better, possibly, than any other medium they afford an almost embarrassing view of the emotions in which hundreds of thousands of people indulged themselves, unguarded and unashamed. Devoted to what they knew and in fear of what they didn't know, they sang, often pompously, of homeland and flag. Shielding themselves from the foe's terrible ability to deliver death, they sang tauntingly of the enemy's flaws. To cheer themselves through the wearisome details of a war-time existence, they sang humorously of their own privations. But fundamentally confused and afraid of what the next day would bring for those they loved, they wrapped themselves in the comforting blanket of sentiment, and hugged it about them to ward off the awful facts they knew to lurk behind the simpering words.

The humor the sentimental songs of the Civil War affords us, then, is mitigated by our knowledge of the anxieties they were designed to soothe. Moreover, the smiles they unconsciously provoke are not entirely at the expense of the nineteenth-century. They are also turned inward as we reflect on how easy it is in time of crisis to give way to the temporary comfort of maudlin self-indulgence. Their humor is, in the last analysis,

that of the human comedy, reminding us that fashions are forever changing and man is constantly weak.

The humor of the patriotic songs is, in great part, similar to that of the sentimental songs. Much of it is unconscious and again the smile is eventually directed not so much at the exaggerations unreasoning enthusiasm can produce as at the propensity humanity has for giving way to them. But in the patriotic songs, unlike the sentimental songs, American horse sense peeps through to puncture the inflated rhetoric of the orators and to admit the role of materialism in human motivation — the presence of hunger in a marching army, the lack of finery in a besieged city.

The self-criticism implicit in some of the patriotic songs is carried into the intentionally humorous songs which caricature the weaknesses of allies as well as satirize the flaws of the enemy. Regional pride is reflected, but there also shines through delight in the myriad nature of America — in the swaggering Southern gentleman, in the German's manhandling of English, in the Yankee farmer's first contact with Southern weather. The humor is, at times, one of joyful recognition, of a nation discovering itself even as it sets out with good prospects of destroying itself. Although a battlefield was their meeting place, men whose homes were separated by thousands of miles were meeting, and even their invective is based on a just-born awareness of what they are capable of doing.

Comedy's proximity to tragedy has long been recognized. It should not, therefore, be surprising to learn that in the midst of a bloody war, made particularly cruel by the former intimacy of the combatants, the American soldier, North and South, laughed in his songs, and laughed at himself as well as others.

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*Civil War Humor:*

## Anecdotes & Recollections

ROBERT F. LUCID

POST-WAR LITERARY PERIODS IN THE UNITED STATES have always produced a body of writing, popular and otherwise, which reflected the national temper with singular clarity. The backwash of a wartime society fills the literary market with more than novels and poems; contemporary histories, military and political memoirs, and commemorative biographies also appear, as our own time testifies, to comment upon the period of national violence. The period following the American Civil War was no exception, but besides the histories, the memoirs and the biographies, it produced another literary phenomenon. In the first decade following the war, and again in the eighties and nineties, there broke out a rash of bound volumes of wartime anecdotes.<sup>1</sup> These volumes were often large and handsomely made, and were produced in quantities which indicate that a large market was available for them. They were not collections of only the wit and humor of the war, though the witty or humorous anecdote was well represented. It would be more accurate to compare them to the almanac than to the humorous anthology, for, as in the almanac, many of the sketches are deadly serious, and many more strive for an "interesting" or morally instructive effect. The principle of organization in the collected anecdotes, furthermore, is the same as that of the almanac.

<sup>1</sup> The popularity of these works can only be inferred, but the range of the sampling, taken from Harper Library at the University of Chicago, indicates a large market. Of thirteen volumes, five are very large (over six hundred closely printed pages) with gold-leaf trimming and handsome illustrations. Three of these, published immediately after the war, were re-issued in the post-reconstruction period. The rest of the books range from the moderately attractive down to the cheapest pulp-paper editions. Simply the fact that thirteen such volumes exist today in a library which

There is neither any causal connection between the stories, nor any general pattern of organization for the whole. The editor of one collection states: "The highest moral integrity, and the lowest human depravity, are blended in their exhibition with the humorous, religious, and heroic; and the compiler deems it no fault, if, in the miscellaneous arrangement of his subjects, the thoughts of his readers trip suddenly

'From grave to gay — from lively to severe.'<sup>2</sup>

The popularity of such a highly unsophisticated literary form is, of course, a comment on the sophistication of the post-war reading public. But the peculiar circumstances of the war itself were almost certainly the main reason for the success of such collections. The chances of any given American — soldier or civilian — having had a vivid personal experience of the Civil War were extremely high. Not only had four million men served in the two armies, but millions more had experienced the facts of invasion, occupation, victory or defeat. Such a group constituted a ready-made market for a literary product which dealt in personal reminiscences. One of the marked characteristics of the anecdotes is their careful delineation of time and place: dates are always given, battles are named, commanding officers listed, and participating regiments carefully differenti-

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has made no special effort to procure works of this kind would seem to imply that they were widely circulated. These works are:

- Felix G. De Fontaine, (Editor) *Marginalia; or, Gleanings from an Army Notebook* (Columbia, S.C.: Steam Power-press of F. G. De Fontaine & Co., 1864).  
 Frank Moore, (Editor) *Anecdotes, Poetry and Incidents of the War* (New York: Printed for the Subscribers, 1866).  
 Richard Miller Devens (Pseudonym Frazar Kirkland), *Anecdotes and Incidents of the War of the Rebellion* (Hartford: Hartford Publishing Co., 1867).  
 Edward P. Smith, (Editor) *Incidents of the United States Christian Commission* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1869).  
 Theodore Gerrish and John S. Hutchinson, (Editors) *The Blue and the Gray* (Portland: Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1883).  
 Edward D. Townsend, *Anecdotes of the Civil War in the United States* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884).  
 Washington Davis, *Camp Fire Chats of the Civil War* (Hartford: Park Publishing Company, 1887).  
 Joseph W. Morton, *Sparks from the Camp Fire* (Philadelphia: Keystone Publishing Company, 1890).  
 Benjamin W. Goodhue, *Incidents of the Civil War* (Chicago: J. D. Tallmadge, 1890).  
 Lizzie Cary Daniel, (Editor) *Confederate Scrap-book* (Richmond: J. L. Hill Printing Company, 1893).  
 Richard Miller Devens (Pseudonym Frazar Kirkland), *Reminiscences of the Blue and the Gray, '61-'65* (Chicago: Preston Publishing Company, c. 1895).  
 Edward Anderson, *Camp Fire Stories* (Chicago: Star Publishing Company, 1896).

*The Picket Line*, (Editor) "A Member of the G.A.R.," (New York: n.d.).

Hereafter either editor's names or short titles will be used.

<sup>2</sup> De Fontaine, "Introduction."



ated.<sup>3</sup> The nostalgic personal appeal which the books hoped to commercialize is exemplified by the cover of *Sparks from the Campfire*. At the bottom of the cover a campfire, surrounded by soldiers, sends up a curling wreath of smoke. At the top, a loop of the wreath encircles a comfortable fireplace scene, where three balding men, in armchairs, are shown smoking their cigars and talking. A similar appeal was made to civilian nostalgia, as will be seen, by the inclusion of a very great number of anecdotes concerning military foraging. When any army is required to subsist off the country it traverses, it is quite likely that the civilian population will remember the foraging — if with a different spirit — quite as clearly as the veterans of the campaign. In such anecdotes there is equal care to preserve the details of names, dates and locale. Thus the contemporary reader was likely to find retold anecdotes of incidents which he had witnessed, or participated in. It is clear that personalized reminiscence, sometimes mellowed and sometimes still fiercely partisan, was the attraction which the anecdotes offered to the post-war and post-reconstruction reading public.

## II

The body of anecdotes divides itself, of course, into two principal sections: Northern and Southern.<sup>4</sup> They have certain features in common, foremost among which is the tone of intense patriotism. Both sides boast a tremendous veneration for their flags, as physical objects of reverence.<sup>5</sup> The flag and "the cause" are expounded in story after story, most frequently, perhaps, in the dying words of soldiers.

Major Barnum, of the Twelfth New York regiment, was one of the many brave officers who were mortally wounded in the battles of the Peninsula. While lying down breathing his last, in the agony of his bodily suffering, a friend asked him if he had any message to send home. He replied —

"Tell my wife that in my last thoughts were blended my wife, my boy and my flag."

He asked of the physician how the battle went, and when told that it was favorable to the Union cause, he said, "God bless the old fla—" and expired with the prayer finishing inaudibly with his closing lips. A noble prayer and a noble death.<sup>6</sup>

Both sides also include the witty sayings and heroic exploits of prominent

<sup>3</sup> Volumes which include special indexes for these features are: Gerrish and Hutchinson; Devens, *Anecdotes*; Devens, *Reminiscences*.

<sup>4</sup> Most of the volumes, with the exception of De Fontaine and Daniel, include Northern and Southern anecdotes.

<sup>5</sup> Devens, *Anecdotes*, pp. 94, 312, 588; Devens, *Reminiscences*, p. 240; Daniel, pp. 126, 228.

<sup>6</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, p. 243.

public figures;<sup>7</sup> indeed, so many Lincoln anecdotes exist that they form a special field of their own, and cannot be dealt with here. But these general areas of similarity encompass a body of material that is almost endlessly varied. There is a difference in tone, first of all, between the Union and Confederate anecdotes which is even more than the difference that could be expected between victor and vanquished. Far fewer collections of Southern anecdotes were published but, proportionately, the attitude of the South — even before defeat — was more bitter than that of the North. Both sides claimed to be fighting a Holy War, and the Northern recruiting song, "We are Coming Father Abraham, Five Hundred Thousand Strong," was an accurate enough reflection of popular Union sentiment. But in the Confederacy, as the anecdotes testify, the concept of the Holy War seems to have been even stronger. The South considered herself to be fighting against an unprovoked invasion, and for the simple liberty to act according to her own best interests. This "cause" was more personal, more deeply appealing than the Northern plea for political unity for future prosperity. Because the Southern cause was so much more personal, it was able to generate a spirit of crusading piety in its anecdotes. A "plain, unlettered Georgia boy" is reported to remark:

In all my intercourse with these Yankees, I have never heard them allude once to what God can do. They talk about what twenty millions of men can do, and what hundreds of millions of money can do, and what their powerful Navy can do; but they leave God out of the calculation altogether; but, sir, the Lord is our trust, and He will be our defence.<sup>8</sup>

This piety throughout the Confederate army, in the ranks and among the leaders, is a recurrent theme in the serious Southern anecdotes. The stories of Stonewall Jackson's days and nights of prayer are extremely popular, and it is reported that "In all Jackson's army, an oath is rarely uttered."<sup>9</sup>

In close association with the Southern claim to personal piety is their embracing of a chivalric code. Jackson's prayers take the form of vigils, in which he appeals for success in the coming quest.<sup>10</sup> Jackson is only one of the Confederate leaders who are honored to the point of veneration in the anecdotes. Stuart, Morgan and Lee are also presented as something more than brave men, or military geniuses; they are Heroic, in the chivalric sense of the word.<sup>11</sup> One reason for this, once again, can be found in the conditions of the war. The Confederate generals, under-

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, p. 139; Davis, p. 211; Moore, pp. 186, 221, 350; and *Picket Line*, pp. 99, 50.

<sup>8</sup> De Fontaine, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 145; Moore, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> De Fontaine, pp. 5, 7, 13, 27; Daniel, p. 32; Moore, p. 171.



equipped and fighting against odds, were forced to tactics which gave their actions a highly romantic caste. Their battles assumed epic proportions because of the daring measures they were forced to employ. But it was not only conditions of battle that gave the leaders such stature. Their commonest thoughts were Olympian. An anecdote tells of two soldiers watching Jackson ride by. "Wonder what he's thinking about?" asks one. "You fool, it would split your skull," is the reply. One volume contains three anecdotes dealing with different occasions when Lee offered to lead a charge, but his men refused to allow him to take the risk. His life was not merely important, it was sacred.<sup>12</sup> A story is told of Morgan, the raider, which is so typical of the chivalric caste that it must be quoted at length:

In the purity of his sentiments, the elevation of his principles, the daring of his spirits, and the manly comeliness of his person, he is emphatically a Chevalier Bayard. Of one bright, noble quality he is the fortunate possessor, which shines conspicuously — looms up over all his other brilliant gifts. I allude to the holy awe with which he views the character and feelings of that connecting link between good men and angels, commonly called women. When he captured that train of cars between Nashville and Louisville, with about a dozen women and four Yankee officers aboard, one of the women, who was the wife of one of the captured officers, rushed up to him and exclaimed: "Oh, Captain Morgan, I implore you don't, for Heaven's sake, hurt my poor little husband." "Madam," replied the Colonel [sic], "I am a Southern soldier, the proper definition of which is, an honorable gentleman. The soldiers of our army, madam, are not fighting for plunder, and we therefore respect private property. We are not capable of poltroonery, and we therefore invariably treat with the profoundest respect the sex. There is a locomotive and train of cars, madam; they are valuable to your Government, and would be still more so to mine. I cannot consent, however, that yourself and the ladies who are with you shall be turned into this forest without protection. Take it, madam, and with it take your poor little husband, and go home."<sup>13</sup>

More sacred than the honor of the leaders, however, were the bodies of the Southern women. The white lady of the South resembles the "white lady" of chivalric tradition in her nobility and purity. Stories of her violation are told with great bitterness in the Southern volumes;<sup>14</sup> and a favorite anecdote is the description of her defying and outwitting Union foragers or occupying officers.

A Yankee general found in one house a lady guarding her household. "Madam," said he, "you are in danger; will you not go beyond the river?" "No sir," she

<sup>12</sup> Gerrish and Hutchinson, pp. 540, 553, 564.

<sup>13</sup> De Fontaine, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 67, 145.

replied, "I have no more business beyond that river than a Yankee has in heaven." "Have you a husband in the Confederate army?" was next asked. "No sir, I have a son; but if my husband does not now enlist, and avenge the wrongs that this town has suffered, I will disown him." "Madam," replied the officer, "I admire your spirit; while I remain here, your person and property shall be protected." The same officer was afterwards heard to exclaim, "I would rather face the whole Confederate army, than the women of Fredricksburg."<sup>15</sup>

Northern collections contain very few anecdotes concerning the heroics of women. This excessive disproportion cannot be explained simply in terms of the military situation. One finds a number of "champion" stories in the Southern collections; stories of women who waited and worked at home, usually in hospitals, while sweethearts or husbands fought for them in the quest for liberty.<sup>16</sup> The tone of these stories is unmistakably chivalrous, and can be found reflected in strictly military anecdotes as well. An artillery lieutenant, all his men killed, is said to have stepped in front of his guns with drawn sword and shouted to the advancing infantry: "Scoundrels, dare not to touch those guns." The narrator continues, "The miserable barbarians, unable to appreciate true heroism, brutally murdered him where he stood."<sup>17</sup> The anecdote sounds Shavian, but it is told with utter seriousness as an illustration of the moral decay of Federal troops.

Closely linked with this chivalric caste is a romantic sentimentality concerning death. Two examples are typical of dying words from the lips of Confederate soldiers:

"Father, I fell defending my dear mother's grave."<sup>18</sup>

"They've done for me now but *my father's there yet! our army's there yet! our cause is there yet!*" and raising himself from the arms of his companions, his pale face lighting up like a sunbeam, he cried, with an enthusiasm I shall never forget, "*and liberty's there yet!*"<sup>19</sup>

Northern collections contain similar examples, but the proportion is far higher among the Southern stories.

### III

The tone of the Union anecdotes should be inferrible by now. There is less bitterness in the Northern stories because, first of all, there is less cause for it. The only atrocity stories that appear, and they are relatively few, concern the condition of Southern military prisons, and the fate of

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Morton, p. 334.

<sup>18</sup> De Fontaine, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

pro-Union sympathizers in the Southern and border states.<sup>20</sup> So far as the anecdotes testify, the conduct of the Confederate troops in their brief occupations of Northern territory was not very hard on the inhabitants. Union anecdotes answer the charges of outrage made against them by depicting the foragers as mischievous boys who love playing pranks.<sup>21</sup> Northern volumes also contain many stories of fraternization between the two armies, anecdotes of a kind notably absent from the Southern anthologies.<sup>22</sup> Jefferson Davis, Lee, Jackson and Stuart are not pictured as bloodthirsty fiends by the Northern stories, in contrast to the startling Southern portrayals of Northern leaders, where even Lincoln is presented as crude, sadistic and lascivious.<sup>23</sup> In general, the difference between the two bodies of anecdotes is the difference between the dedication to a political principle and to a personal one. The Northern cause was Unity; the Southern cause was Liberty, and it is therefore not surprising to find a certain note of abstraction in the seriously patriotic Northern stories. The South had the great advantage of being able to point to invaders of their homes and violators of their families. It would have been difficult for the Northern anecdote to compete with this, even if the South had not been aflame with its chivalric fires. The majority of stories on both sides may be said to support the traditional polarity of the Civil War between the chivalrous, patrician South, and the practical, less romantic North.

#### IV

It would be inaccurate, however, to conclude that the anecdotes deal exclusively with one typical Southerner and one typical Northerner. It is true that most Southerners are represented as having chivalric, romantic characteristics in common, but the intense awareness in the South of regional sovereignty is reflected in the wide variety of Southern types referred to in its anecdotes. One Southern volume approvingly quotes a French critic:

The Southerner of pure race is frank, hearty, open, cordial in his manners, noble in his sentiments, elevated in his notions; he is a worthy descendant of the English gentleman. Surrounded, from infancy, by his slaves, who relieve him from all personal exertion, he is rather indisposed to activity, and is even indolent. He is generous and profuse. . . . To him the practice of hospitality is at once a duty, a pleasure and a happiness. Like the Eastern patriarchs, or Homer's heroes, he spits an ox to regale the guest whom Providence sends him and an old friend recommends to his attention; and to moisten this solid repast,

<sup>20</sup> Morton, pp. 178ff.

<sup>21</sup> Moore, pp. 57-8.

<sup>22</sup> Devens, *Anecdotes*, p. 283; Gerrish and Hutchinson, p. 536; Moore, p. 459.

<sup>23</sup> De Fontaine, p. 85.

he offers Madeira — of which he is as proud as of his horses — that has been twice to the East Indies, and has been ripening full twenty years. He loves the institutions of his country, yet he shows with pride his family plate, the arms on which, half effaced by time, attest his descent from the first colonists, and prove that his ancestors were of a good family in England. When his mind has been cultivated by study, and a tour in Europe has polished his manners and refined his imagination, there is no place in the world in which he would not appear to advantage, no destiny too high for him to reach; he is one of those whom a man is glad to have as a companion and desires as a friend. Ardent and warm hearted, he is of the block from which great orators are made. He is better able to command men than to conquer nature and subdue the soil. When he has a certain degree of the spirit of method, and I will not say will (for he has enough of that), but of that active perseverance so common at the North, he has all the qualities needful to form a great statesman.<sup>24</sup>

This is obviously not the only Southern type, but it is the best, and it is represented in the anecdotes by the Virginian:

The knightliest of the knightly race,  
Who, since the days of old,  
Have kept the lamp of chivalry  
Alight in hearts of gold.<sup>25</sup>

Most of the type Southern-gentlemen who appear are either Virginians or are indistinguishable from them.

The other end of the scale is occupied by the Texans. Almost invariably the Texan is presented as tall, raw-boned, and incredibly tattered. He is illiterate, coarse, but lovable withal, and is a stock character in the droll anecdotes.<sup>26</sup> Between these two extremes it becomes increasingly more difficult to distinguish exactly between the types. Louisiana, especially the New Orleans area, and North and South Carolina, produce the highest type of Southerner almost as regularly as does Virginia. The "Louisiana Tiger" is depicted as a special kind of daredevil in hand-to-hand fighting.<sup>27</sup> Tennesseans are frontier types. They are illiterate, for the most part, but excellent fighters in their coonskin caps and carrying their long rifles.<sup>28</sup>

The anecdote is not a highly descriptive form, of course, and much of the sectionalism consists of identifying a figure as a Virginian, a Georgian or a Texan, with the presumption that the reader will fill in the distinguishing characteristics.<sup>29</sup> So far as actual identifying details go, the anecdotal characterization seems to cut across regional lines and form

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel, p. 232.

<sup>26</sup> Morton, p. 163.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> Moore, p. 59.

<sup>29</sup> Morton, p. 139; Cerrish and Hutchinson, p. 535.

class stratifications. There is the gentleman of social and economic stature, the farmer, the hunter-frontiersman, and the hill-dweller. This last type is spoken of mostly in connection with East Tennessee and West Virginia. An apocryphal anecdote tells of the scout who stumbles on a cabin in the West Virginia hills, and asks the "gaunt-eyed, slim-livered, carnivorous, yellow-skinned, mountain Virginian" if he's "seesech" or Union, and what he thinks of the war. "What war?" exclaimed the old fellow, 'the revolution? . . . why, we gin the Britishers fits, didn't we?'<sup>30</sup>

When the Southern anecdotes identify Yankees regionally, which is not often, they tend to make a distinction between the Michigan, Illinois or Indiana troops and the New Englanders. The latter group, along with the hated New Yorkers, are given no redeeming characteristics. A New Yorker, for example, is said to be wounded on a battlefield. A Samaritan Confederate pours some water into his shattered mouth and the Yankee, when he can speak, says: "You d—d rebel, if I had a musket I would blow out your infernal soul."<sup>31</sup>

There are two general Yankee types presented in the Southern stories. The first is a sort of racial type, and is presented by the same French critic who portrayed the Virginian:

The yankee . . . is reserved, cautious, distrustful; his manners are without grace, cold, and often unprepossessing; he is narrow in his ideas, but practical; and possessing the idea of the proper, he never rises to the grand. He has nothing chivalric about him, and yet he is adventurous, and loves a roving life. His imagination is active and original, producing, however, not poetry but drollery. The Yankee is the laborious ant; he is industrious and sober, frugal and, on the sterile ground of New England, niggardly.<sup>32</sup>

As a racial type, the Yankee is invested with the characteristics of a merchant:

He is crafty, sly, always calculating, boasting of the tricks which he plays upon the careless or trusting buyer, because he looks upon them as marks of his superior sagacity, and well provided with mental reservations to lull his conscience.<sup>33</sup>

The other Yankee type is the journalistic villain; the charlatan or fiend, who perpetrates outrages on the Southern soil. The argument of the Northern abolitionist is presented in the Southern anecdotes as worse than demagogic, it is imbecilic:

My colored friends, hearken unto me. You are the children of Israel, and we

<sup>30</sup> Morton, p. 345.

<sup>31</sup> De Fontaine, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

come to give you freedom. You are oppressed, and we come to deliver you from your thralldom. I stand in Moses' shoes, and President Lincoln stands in Jesus Christ's shoes. Jesus Christ was a very good sort of man, but he didn't make the sin of slavery plain enough.<sup>34</sup>

When this Yankee is not an abolitionist, making absurd speeches, he is a stage villain, and is variously described as dastardly fiend, vandal, or brute.<sup>35</sup> Northern women are infrequently mentioned, but almost always disrespectfully, as in an anecdote in which a Southern officer is stripped of his clothes in the sight of some Yankee women, who "chuckled heartily at the sight of a denuded man."<sup>36</sup> The Northern leaders are uniformly treated as gangsters: General Hooker, "the most dastardly of the many braggarts the Yankee nation has furnished during the war," hides behind Southern women hostages;<sup>37</sup> McClellan is a liar;<sup>38</sup> and Butler is a coward, horse thief and land pirate, and is "the beastliest, bloodiest poltroon and pick-pocket the world ever saw."<sup>39</sup>

Northern anecdotes present a picture of the Southerner which is somewhat less harsh than the corresponding Confederate portraits. It is possible to find an anecdote entitled, "Splendid Service in a Bad Cause,"<sup>40</sup> praising the courage of Southern officers and men. Whatever else the typical Southerner was to the popular reader of the North, he was no coward. There is, however, a rebuttal to the Confederate claim to chivalry in the Northern humorous stories. In the anecdote of the West Virginia hill-dweller, for example, the "yellow-skinned, slim-livered" description is followed by the ironic comment that he was "doubtless one of the first families."<sup>41</sup> The pride of Southern gentlemen frequently is treated as puerile and childish. When Jefferson Davis was captured, anecdotes were told concerning his haughty behavior, melodramatic breast-baring at the bayonets, and brawling with the blacksmith who manacled him, all concentrating on the juvenile quality of the allegedly chivalric Southern pride.<sup>42</sup> In answer to the intense emotionalism generated by this pride, the Northern anecdotes adopted a sort of official position which is stated, in one of them, by a Union soldier:

I am not fighting, or willing to fight against relatives . . . but for a principle — a flag — a government. Nor am I in the loyal army because I hate the South, for in my opinion that man who can not rise above sectional animosities is not

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 59.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 103.

<sup>40</sup> Devens, *Anecdotes*, p. 276.

<sup>41</sup> See *Ante*, n. 33.

<sup>42</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, pp. 655-657.



equal to the emergency! One can give no greater proof that he loves his whole country than that he is willing to die for its salvation.<sup>43</sup>

Those Northern anecdotes which adopt this position do not "descend to personalities." Confederates are, theoretically, traitors to the Constitution, but it does not follow that every Confederate is a personal villain. The point is a fine one, of course, and there are anecdotes enough which tell of the dishonesty, boorishness and cruelty of marauding bands of secessionists.<sup>44</sup> Even here, however, sectional delineation is infrequent in the Northern anecdotes. Three general types are presented: the gentleman, from Virginia and elsewhere, who is brave, fiery, and somewhat childishly petulant; the common soldier, who is a figure in the stories of fraternization, and who is indistinguishable from the Northern infantryman except for the occasional presence of a drawl in his speech; and the hill-dweller, West Virginian or East Tennessean, who is crude, illiterate, and *per se* funny.

Northern self-portraits are less distinctive than their Southern equivalents. Northern leaders are praised highly, but these figures are infrequently typical Yankees. The Yankee gentleman is as honorable and patriotic as the Virginian, but he is in closer touch with the rank and file. Often it is hard to distinguish between the leaders and the soldiers, especially in the humorous anecdotes — a detail which is in marked contrast with Southern anecdotes of the same kind. Many anecdotes are told by the Yankees about their own "shrewdness," but this quality, as represented by the North, bears no resemblance to the commercial rapacity credited to them by the South. Yankee shrewdness, in their own anecdotes, consists simply of common sense, expressed with coolness and deliberation:

When the two great armies of Grant and Lee were fighting near the Potomac river, a colonel in command of a Maine regiment learned that there was a Confederate wagon train which could be easily captured.

Anxious to immortalize himself and his command, he immediately detached three companies of his regiment, under the command of his major, to advance and capture the prize. The major was a brave officer, and also a shrewd Yankee, and evidently did not have much faith in the success of the enterprise.

"No trouble! No trouble!" repeated the colonel, "dash in upon the train, shoot down the horses, and it is yours." The three small companies marched away, and after several hours, returned to the camp without the wagons. The colonel . . . demanded why they had not brought them.

The major, with the coolness and deliberation that a Yankee alone can display, slowly responded, "There are a few reasons why I did not bring them in." "Give me those reasons," demanded his superior.

<sup>43</sup> Devens, *Anecdotes*, p. 523.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.



"Well, sir, the Po river was between me and the train; I had no bridge to cross upon, it was too deep to ford, and my men could not swim. Then there was a heavy skirmish line on the other bank of the river, and beyond that, in the woods, there was a brigade of cavalry, and on the hill, to their right, was a battery of artillery, and beyond these, but between them and the wagon train was the Confederate line of battle, and upon the whole I thought it would not be convenient for me to bring it off with my 150 men." The colonel subsided.<sup>45</sup>

It is certainly true that the Northern anecdotes reveal far less variety in social stratification. There is no real equivalent to the Virginian — Texan polarity. But there is some sectional distinction shown among the Northern forces. A favorite type is the "Hoosier," or Indianan, who is used extensively in the humorous sketches because of his pithy straightforwardness, and in the adventure stories for his courage.<sup>46</sup> The Hoosier is typical of the midwestern Union volunteer, and is the closest thing to the Southern rustic that the Northern anecdotes produce.

Except for an occasional anecdote in the "say yeou" dialect,<sup>47</sup> the Yankees of the Eastern seaboard and New England are not often characterized. The Vermont brigade is sketched at full length at least once, obviously by a local journalist. If this report is to be believed, the Vermont soldiers were the most honest, the bravest, and the quickest to volunteer in the whole Union: "They knew perfectly well that they were the best fighters in the known world. They were long of limb and could outmarch the army. They were individually self-reliant, and skillful in the use of arms; and they honestly believed that the Vermont brigade could not be beaten by all the combined armies of the Rebellion."<sup>48</sup> Such humorously hyperbolic descriptions of regiments are not uncommon, but the very uniformity of the praise makes these anecdotes useless as evidence of the peculiarities of sectional groups.

## V

One section of the North, however, is distinctly portrayed at great length in both the Northern and Southern collections: the immigrants. German immigrants, known to both sides as "Dutchmen," played an active part in the war. But their role in all the anecdotes is exemplary of one of the fundamental characteristics of the humorous anecdote. It was a convention in the anecdotes that any accent which was not white and American was automatically funny. The "tam fool," "Shtonefence Zhonson" speech attributed to the Germans was sufficient to justify the

<sup>45</sup> Gerrish and Hutchinson, p. 630.

<sup>46</sup> Morton, p. 152.

<sup>47</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, p. 33.

<sup>48</sup> Moore, p. 335.

telling of an otherwise quite humorless story.<sup>40</sup> The dialect suggested a complete characterization, and a complicated situation only made the thing funnier. The "Dutchman" was one of three principal clowns in the humorous anecdote, sharing honors with the Irishman and, most of all, the negro. Germans were invariably presented as fat, burly, clumsy, prodigious consumers of food and drink — especially beer — and absurdly fond of the pomp of military ceremony. One of the most elaborate of the Northern humorous anecdotes concerns the scene which followed when a German regiment, led by a fat, red-faced major, marched over a bee-hive which had been thrown into the road:

The drum-major was a tall, stout German, and was dressed most fantastically, according to military custom. Medals and ornaments covered his brightly-colored clothes, and an immense bear-skin shako added to the proportions of his tall form. Marching backward until the band caught the measure of his exact motions, he turned to march up the road, just as the next backward step would have placed him astride the broken bee-hive, which was surrounded by an immense swarm of infuriated bees.

"Dunder and Blitzen! vat is dis?" yelled the drum major, as he leaped frantically in the air, flinging his baton far away, and making his two great hands revolve about his ears like the sails of a windmill. A few more grotesque hops, skips and antics, and the musical man broke for the woods, as though chain lightning was after him. Approaching the fence, he made a mighty bound, cleared the five bars, but catching his toe in an upturned knot of the upper rail, he revolved at least three times before he landed, with all his finery, most melodiously in the compost heap of the cow-yard.

The fate of the whole column is described in similarly comic terms.

... But the sublimest spectacle of all was reserved for the big Dutchman who presided over the great bass drum. Ah, he was a huge fellow, and reminded me much of Van Amburgh's hippotamus. His head was big, too, and his nose, which was as large as a quart bottle, was peppered with red spots which faintly indicated a fondness for the national beverage — lager beer. At this moment he was evidently bewildered, for his great goggle-eyes were rolling right and left whilst he held the drumstick with his right hand high up in the air in the attitude of striking; but suddenly he ducked his head as quickly as a terrapin does when touched on the nose with a red-hot iron by some mischievous urchin. The drumsticks dropped from his hands; again he ducked his head and convulsively attempted to slip under the great strap which passed over his shoulders and confined him to the heavy drum; but it was "no go," for the stout leather was strongly buckled. Then he started to run, but at the very first step his toe struck a stone and he rolled on his back in the dust. There he lay kicking, blowing, puffing, swearing and vainly attempting to free himself from the big drum, and at the same time protect his vulnerable

<sup>40</sup> Gerrish and Hutchinson, p. 633.

point, his nose, from the savage assaults of the enraged insects; but it was all in vain, and making a desperate effort he rose to his feet again and started to run, but before twenty steps were taken he stubbed his toe again and turned a series of somersaults in the dust. Luckily, however, as he fell a projecting root tore a wide slit in the head of the drum, and "Dutchy," with the quickness of despair, got upon his knees, thrust his head into the slit of the drum-head, and his hands into his capacious pockets. The position was somewhat ridiculous, but it afforded security against the attacks of the pursuing foe. . . .<sup>50</sup>

Another anecdote describes the charge of a maddened bull into the ranks of a German regiment during meal time.<sup>51</sup> Still another tells of the charge of a German cavalry troop over a field in which a ditch lay hidden.<sup>52</sup> The humor of all of these is derived from the physical discomfiture inflicted on the foreigners. Non-humorous anecdotes occasionally testify to the honesty of the Germans, and their considerable achievements in the field, but it is notable that dialect is always omitted from such accounts.<sup>53</sup>

The Irishman as a comic figure is also extremely popular. He appears in the Southern humorous stories almost as often as in the Northern, and his characteristics are always the same. He is the stage Irishman of *Handy Andy*. He hails from the "auld sod," blusters and talks a tremendous fight, but is quite often humorously indisposed in the face of real combat. His whisky consumption excels even the beer-drinking prodigies of the German, and when he shows bravery in battle it is likely to be because he is looking for a whisky flask that he has lost.<sup>54</sup> He differs from the German insofar as the latter is presented as pure buffoon, incapable of the most elementary common sense, while the Irishman periodically comes up with a shrewd, alcoholic insight into the situation. For all his insight, however, he is a clown, and the funniest thing about him is his speech. A typical example of this dialect is given when a wounded man complains of the pain of his wounds, just after another comrade has had his head shot off. An Irishman, "Pat" (his name is almost always Pat), cries: "Blasht your soul, you owld woman, shtop cryin'; you make more noise about it than the man that losht his head!"<sup>55</sup>

The popularity of the German and Irish dialect joke can be attributed in part to the heavy influx of nationals from those countries around the mid-century point. The great Irish famine of 1845 sent hundreds of thousands of immigrants, mostly peasants, to America. They landed in

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 578.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 734.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 537.

<sup>53</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, pp. 309, 310.

<sup>54</sup> Moore, p. 261.

<sup>55</sup> Morton, p. 243.



"Here's me and me horse."

Northern ports, and, for the most part, remained in that section. By 1850 there were almost one million Irishmen in America, where the total population was around 23 millions. The German statistics of 1850 are not quite so high, but it is reported that over half a million people of German birth were divided almost equally between the Eastern and Western states.<sup>56</sup> Yankee recruiting officers, furthermore, in their efforts to fill their quotas, scoured German poor houses and peasant villages and imported a large number of immigrants in this manner after the outbreak of the war.<sup>57</sup> An unsophisticated native population, with feelings of superiority toward the newcomers, found a natural supply of humorous material in their unfamiliar peculiarities of speech.

Some few jokes are told at the expense of Frenchmen,<sup>58</sup> and there is one doubtful Swedish anecdote which depends for its effect on incongruity of speech. Finally, the anti-Semitic joke, with heavily underscored dialect, is occasionally found on both sides.<sup>59</sup> One reference in a Southern collection is made to allegedly strong anti-Semitic feelings of the Confederate soldiery, and though no reasons are given, it is presumably due to the usurious practices of the "Sutlers," or civilian proprietors of Post Exchanges, who were often depicted as Jews or Germans.

## VI

More than any immigrant group, however, the negroes were the butt of the Civil War humorous anecdote. The negro figured prominently in the serious as well as the humorous stories on both sides, and an examination of the differences between the two treatments of the figure is illuminating. In the second year of the war, the North, having issued the Emancipation Proclamation, espoused the unqualified freedom of the slaves, as a companion cause to the preservation of the Union. Such a cause, theoretically, should have lent to Northern anecdotes an emotional fire which they had previously lacked. But no such thing occurred. Northern collections reveal a number of sketches about the gratitude of the escaped or liberated negroes,<sup>60</sup> but no real effort is made to personalize the issue in the way, say, Southern writers wrote of the violation of their homes by Federal troops. Serious Southern anecdotes about the negro, of course, deal with his warm loyalty to his masters, his love of slavery, and the prosperity of the negro under the slave system compared

<sup>56</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 396.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 603.

<sup>58</sup> Morton, p. 123; Anderson, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Gerrish and Hutchinson, p. 330; De Fontaine, p. 181.

<sup>60</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, p. 430.

with his starvation and ruin after emancipation. The slave often rises to a kind of heroism in his loyalty to his masters in the Southern sketches:

The Yankee steamship Vanderbilt, Rear Admiral Wilkes, from Havana, steamed up to Nassau, and sent a boat ashore with dispatches for the Yankee Consul. The most ludicrous scene took place on the arrival of the small boat at one of the wharves. The fences and cotton bales around were covered with a swarm of Nassau negroes, who received the Yankees with hisses, jeers, taunts and groans. Blank amazement pictured itself on the faces of the crew, while the officer in command was evidently nervous and nonplussed. During the stay of the boat at the wharf, the darkies indulged in such cynical reflections as these: "Golly, how dey'd put out if de 209 was in sight." "I wonder if dey's heard from Charleston?" "If Cap'n Maffit was here, he'd sink dem in two minutes." A big negro on a cotton bale surrounded by his satellites, gave a stentorian version of the Yankee national air "John Brown lies a mouldering in the grave," only he altered names and phrases to suit his disgust for the Northern auditors. He also produced "Dixie" and the "Bonny Blue Flag." When the officer returned, and the boat pushed off, cheers were given for Jeff. Davis, and three tremendous groans for old Abe Lincoln. The Yankees retorted not a word. . . .<sup>61</sup>

The serious Northern sketches uniformly depict the negro as groveling in gratitude.

Humorous anecdotes in which the negro plays a part display certain superficial differences in the Northern and Southern treatment. Some Southern stories are told at the expense of freed negroes who are presented as pompous and self-important, and are "downed" by various devices.<sup>62</sup> Others feature a free negro and a slave, and derive their humor from the discomfiture of the former at the arguments of the latter.<sup>63</sup> The Northern collections vary this by having the free negro "Jown" the slave, or derive a humorous effect from the excessive, hyperbolic gratitude of the negro to his liberators.<sup>64</sup> But even anecdotes of this kind are comparatively rare.

The majority of negro anecdotes, on both sides, are quite indistinguishable. Typical is a Northern anecdote concerning a freed negro who wishes to be sworn in as cook in a Union regiment. The anecdote consists of the ceremony conducted by the corporal in charge:

Corporal: "You do solemnly swear that you will support the Constitution of the United States and see that there are no grounds floating upon the coffee at all times."

<sup>61</sup> De Fontaine, p. 180.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>64</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, p. 169.



Negro: "Yes massa, I do dat," he replied, "I allers settle him in de coffee pot." . . . .

Corporal: "And you do solemnly swear that you will support the Constitution of all loyal States, and not spit upon the plates when cleaning them, or wipe them with your shirt-sleeves."

Here a frown lowered upon the brow of the negro, his eyes expanded to their largest dimensions, while his lips protruded with a rounded form as he exclaimed: "Lordy, massa, I never do dat. I allers washes him nice. Ole missus mighty 'ticular 'bout dat." . . . .

"And lastly," continued the corporal, "You do solemnly swear that when this war is over you'll make tracks for Africa mighty fast."

"Yes massa, I do dat. I allers wanted to go to Cheecargo."<sup>65</sup>

The "Rastus" joke is unquestionably the most popular single humorous anecdote on either side. It is always in dialect, and frequently exploits the various physiological peculiarities which were attributed to the negro at that time.<sup>66</sup> The convention was that a negro, as such, was funny; and in the face of such a convention, few Northern anecdotes attempted to portray him as a real human being.

## VII

The conventional devices of the humorous anecdote, then, on both sides, included dialect jokes, amusement at the ignorance of foreigners, and a humorous effect derived from the physical discomfort of others. There were other conventions too. Commanding officers expose themselves to the enemy and are roundly cursed by unsuspecting sentries.<sup>67</sup> Military duties are spoofed as being stuffy and unnecessary.<sup>68</sup> "Dandies" are made the butt of jokes almost as often as the lowest classes.<sup>69</sup> Drunkenness is treated, on both sides, as an inevitable and automatically funny situation.<sup>70</sup> There are even a few tall tales, though not so many as might be expected among military anecdotes.<sup>71</sup> Finally, some connections are established between the anecdotes and the more formal, successful humorists of the day. One of Robert Henry Newell's "Orpheus C. Kerr"

<sup>65</sup> Morton, pp. 426-29.

<sup>66</sup> De Fontaine, p. 190.

<sup>67</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, p. 445; De Fontaine, pp. 86, 91.

<sup>68</sup> Devens, *Reminiscences*, pp. 183, 186, 194.

<sup>69</sup> Morton, p. 233.

<sup>70</sup> Gerrish and Hutchinson, pp. 564, 634.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390; De Fontaine, p. 45.





Yours truly  
Petroleum V. Nasby

letters appears in a Union collection,<sup>72</sup> and David Ross Locke's "Petroleum V. Nasby's Letter Showing Why He Should Not Be Drafted" is reprinted in at least three different collections.<sup>73</sup>

The anecdotes of the Civil War, collected and otherwise, offer an opportunity for the study of a period's popular literary expression which can scarcely be exhausted here. A more comprehensive survey than this should be followed by reference to the contemporary periodicals, to trace the patterns indicated here as they unfolded in the context of historical events. This study will have served its purpose if it has indicated the general outlines which some of these patterns formed.

<sup>72</sup> Moore, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> Devens, *Anecdotes*, p. 211; Devens, *Reminiscences*, p. 211; Gerrish and Hutchinson, p. 725. B. P. Shillaber's "Mrs. Partington" and Seba Smith's "Jack Downing" are also to be found in Devens, *Reminiscences*, pp. 461 and 355 respectively.

## AN AVALANCHE OF ADJECTIVES

THE DRIVELING BUT DEVILISH SPIRIT of New-England Abolitionism excites mingled feelings of pity, contempt, and scorn. The war which Lincoln is now waging upon the South is one of the most unrighteous, atrocious, and unjustifiable recorded in history. The guilt of its unnumbered and heaven-daring crimes rests heavily upon the head of the besotted tyrant by whom it is prosecuted for the gratification of his own unhalloved ambition and wicked revenge. The Ruler of the Universe certainly never designed that a mongrel race, composed of the *débris* of all the nations of Europe, swept upon its shores by the waves of the Atlantic — infidel and God-defying; presumptuous and Bible-ignoring; rife with every error and pernicious ism; cowardly, cruel, and treacherous — should exercise despotic authority over a Christian people.

*Memphis Avalanche.*

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### Civil War Humor:

## Its Role in Novels on Slavery

LEON T. DICKINSON

IT WAS THE CONTENTION OF WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* caused the emergence of Lincoln on the national scene, and Lincoln himself is said to have told Mrs. Stowe that she caused the War. However one measures the political effect of her explosive novel, there can be no question of its provocative power in the world of letters. Probably no other book in our history has stimulated, directly and immediately, so much writing.<sup>1</sup> The book was a powerful one, and it appeared at a critical time. By mid-century, discussions of slavery, common enough in earlier years, had come to be frowned upon as either

<sup>1</sup> The exact number of slavery novels appearing in the '50s has never been accurately determined. I have counted more than thirty for the years 1850-60. A contemporary, perhaps a publisher's reader, speaks loosely of "some dozens" of replies to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and writes that of the "many more" remaining "in obscure manuscript," he has "had the pleasure of looking over a score or two" ("Uncle Tomitudes," *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, I [January, 1853], p. 100). Probably a fairly complete list of novels is afforded by the titles mentioned in the following works: Hubert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940); Francis Pendleton Gaines, *The Southern Plantation, A Study in the Development and Accuracy of a Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925); John Herbert Nelson, "The Negro Character in American Literature," *Humanistic Studies of the University of Kansas*, IV (1926), pp. 7-146; Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Feminine Fifties* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940); Jennette R. Tandy, "Pro-Slavery Propaganda in American Fiction of the Fifties," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXI (January-April, 1922), pp. 41-50, 170-78; Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Anti-Slavery Sentiment in American Literature Prior to 1865* (Washington: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1929). Many slavery novels, particularly the southern "replies" to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, explicitly acknowledge Mrs. Stowe or her book in their prefaces or conclusions. A typical comment: "The authoress had anticipated writing something on Southern life before she saw or read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' But after the perusal of that overdrawn picture, she really felt it her duty to stand up for her own

tedious or subversive.<sup>2</sup> "Abolitionist" was a hated word, North as well as South. Then came the Fugitive Slave Law. The gases of resentment to slavery had been gathering and the Slave Law compressed them. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the igniting spark.

The novels of slavery are serious books, and yet a number of them are not without humor. It is the purpose of this study to consider the ways humor was used in the slavery novels of the '50's to enhance their interest and appeal. The novels vary considerably in the quantity and quality of their humor. In general the pro-slavery novels include very little, the moderate or neutral ones somewhat more, while the anti-slavery novels contain the most and the best. This three-fold division may obscure gradations of opinion and feeling about slavery, but it will allow a discussion of the novels roughly in the order in which they successfully use humor.

# I

In one way or another the fictional replies to Mrs. Stowe incorporated most of the common arguments in support of slavery: that it was sanctioned by Scripture, that it was an ideal paternal system for a backward race, that the slaves were happy under the system, and that under it slaves were better off than white wage slaves in the industrial cities of the North or of England.<sup>3</sup> By way of voicing these arguments novelists devised plots that showed the negro happy on the plantation, but miserable in a Northern city. A favorite device was to allow a Northerner, skeptical of the rightness of slavery or hostile to it, to visit a plantation.

native place" (Martha Haines Butt, *Antifanaticism: A Tale of the South* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1853), p. 266).

<sup>2</sup> The *Putnam's* commentator, taking issue with reviewers who attributed the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to its subject, reveals current opinion: "But a more effete subject, one of which the public were more heartily wearied, which was more unwelcome to ears polite than that of slavery, it would not have been easy to select. . . . The martyr age of anti-slavery, as Harriet Martineau called it, had passed away, and the more fatal age of indifference and contempt had succeeded" ("Uncle Tomitudes," *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, I [January, 1853], p. 100). John Townsend Trowbridge, author of an anti-slavery novel, recalls that his father, in western New York, used to deplore abolition talk: "'Wrong?' he would say [of slavery]. 'Of course it's wrong. . . . But what's the use of fighting it here at the North. . . . Any serious attempt to abolish it will bring on civil war and break up the Union'" (*My Own Story* [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1903], p. 214). In light of this attitude one can see why Mrs. Stowe had feared her book would offend not the South but the North.

<sup>3</sup> The pro-slavery position is well stated in a contemporary symposium: *The Pro-Slavery Argument; as Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States*. . . (Charleston: Walker, Richards & Co., 1852). A vivid poetic statement of the case is William J. Grayson, *The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora, and Other Poems* (Charleston: J. Russell, 1854). A modern treatment of the subject is William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935).

There, charmed by his gracious host and hostess, he was able to see how well off the slaves really were; the institution, he learned, had been maligned, and he came away with changed views.<sup>4</sup> Another procedure was to contrast the lot of the runaway slave with that of the faithful one who stayed by his master.<sup>5</sup> Still a third method was to follow a slave, escaped or freed, into the North, where his condition could be shown to be pitiful or ridiculous.<sup>6</sup>

Several writers tried to inject a note of humor into their depictions of plantation life. Since dramatists and novelists, including the South's own Simms, had for some time recognized and exploited the negro as a comic type, the fictional apologists for slavery found it easy to introduce him as the amusing creature he was believed to be. But however amusing he was in life, it took more than a few cabin scenes and some more or less accurate rendering of his odd talk to realize his comic possibilities. One does not quarrel with the dialect, which often is convincing enough, but too often what he says is not very funny. The negro frolicking before his cabin may reveal his happy condition, but his actions and words are not necessarily humorous. A notable exception are the negroes of Mrs. Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, particularly Bacchus, Aunt Phillis's husband. In contrast to his industrious, level-headed wife, Bacchus is a carefree soul. Drinking, playing his banjo, parading in his master's cast-off garments, he thoroughly enjoys himself. He speaks with great pomp in church. He is a swaggerer, envied by all his humbler fellows. He is convinced that he sees Aunt Peggy's wraith; and in spite of his wife's ridicule, he will not rest until he has fired his shotgun at it, when the wraith proves to be Jupiter the cat. The portrait owes much to tradition, but it is skillfully drawn and it helps make the book more readable than most of its kind.

A novel of the negro come North, in which he is shown not as pitiable but ridiculous, is a satiric tale which, except for a disastrous structural

<sup>4</sup> Robert Criswell, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Contrasted with Buckingham Hall, the Planter's Home, or, A Fair View of Both Sides of the Slavery Question (New York: D. Fanshaw, 1852); Martha Haines Butt, *Antifanaticism*; [David Brown], *The Planter: or, 13 Years in the South. By a Northern Man* (Philadelphia: H. Hooker, 1853). Stories of Northerners visiting the South often were based on fact. See, e.g., Caroline Howard Gilman, *Recollections of a New England Bride . . .* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1852); Neemiah Adams, *South-Side View of Slavery; or Three Months at the South in 1854* (Boston: T. R. Marvin, 1854). Though not a convert to slavery, Parson Adams was sufficiently won over that he publicly deplored Northern meddling, for which opinion Boston reviled him.

<sup>5</sup> Mary H. Eastman, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life As It Is* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1852).

<sup>6</sup> Eastman, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*; Bayard Rush Hall, *Frank Freeman's Barber Shop* (New York: C. Scribner, 1852); John W. Page, *Uncle Robin in His Cabin in Virginia, and Tom Without One in Boston* (Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1853); Mrs. G. M. Flanders, *The Ebony Idol, by a Lady of New England* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1860).

flaw, comes close to being a most amusing story. *The Ebony Idol*, by Mrs. G. M. Flanders,<sup>7</sup> is no defense of slavery but an extravagant satire on the fanaticism of Northern philanthropists. The Reverend Mr. Cary, a New England Presbyterian preacher, has decided he must preach Abolition from his pulpit. Opposed by his wife and by a sane and strong-minded parishioner, Squire Bryan,<sup>8</sup> Cary drives ahead on his crusade. His supporters include the sentimental, visionary spinster, Miss Dickey, and the coarse and illiterate Hobbs and his wife. Blind to social needs at home, they ignore Mrs. Bryan's efforts to collect funds for the paralytic son of an impoverished widow.<sup>9</sup> Nothing will do but that they procure a runaway slave and, under the auspices of the Carean African Aid Society, bring him to town to look after. Caesar is feted lavishly, crowned with a symbolic wreath of black and white roses, and proceeds to live first with one of his champions and then with another. Here, unfortunately, the story falls apart. Caesar is lazy, stupid, dirty, and insolent. The town folk, tired of their bargain, balk when Hobbs tries to marry Caesar to his white servant girl, and in protest against his plan, they tar and feather him. Caesar thereafter disappears from the story, and it degenerates into an insipid romance.

The early portions of the story are truly amusing. The author in her own person is broadly but humorously sarcastic. In a parody of the enthusiastic clergyman's fervid rhetoric she reveals Cary's moral ruminations:

And thus Mr. Cary sits in his arm-chair. . . . As he muses, his own past inactivity looms up before him, lashing him for his stupidity, and culpable ignorance of his duty to the shackled slave. The clarion note has been sounded into his deafened ear, and he resolves that he will shake off this unchristian stupor, gird on his armor, and if needs be, die upon the field of battle! David Copperfield, in his first zeal for a seedy wardrobe, never sighed for a shabby waistcoat as devoutly as Mr. Cary now aspired to tar and feathers! "Riding on a rail" seemed a mode of conveyance so desirable, and so soothing to his conscience, that he longed to rush into the heart of the South, and hurl his

<sup>7</sup> (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1860).

<sup>8</sup> The Squire's complaint is identical to that of parishioners in Trowbridge's home town: "[The Presbyterian minister's] hearers were all good Whigs and Democrats, who paid him for preaching sound doctrinal discourses, and did not care to be reminded, Sunday after Sunday, that . . . they were wickedly winking at a wrong committed in States some hundreds of miles off" (*My Own Story*, p. 212).

<sup>9</sup> One of what a reviewer called the book's "spirited illustrations" (*Knickerbocker*, LVII [October, 1860], p. 446) pictures the widow, and is captioned "Portrait of that Old Lady" (*Ebony Idol*, p. 31). It is identical, though reduced, to the drawing entitled "Ruth Partington," the frontispiece of B. P. Shillaber's *Life and Sayings of Mrs. Partington* (1854), and also to the drawing labeled "Contentment," suggestive of Aunt Polly, in *Tom Sawyer* (1876). See Walter Blair, *Native American Humor* (1800-1900) (New York: American Book Co., 1937), p. 517.



argumentative firebrands into the very face and eyes of the slaveholders! Oh that his sheltering arm could clasp every bondman in the Universe in one fraternal embrace! Oh, he moaned! had I but wealth to ransom them from their cruel bondage, and bear them back to the peaceful shores of their own Africa! Alexander-like, he sighed that there were no more slaves to be thus conditionally ransomed!<sup>10</sup>

In the pulpit, says the author, Mr. Cary "... with the blindest of infatuations ... lost sight of the boundary line that separates mental independence from folly, and mingled religion with politics until he concocted a kind of moral salad, intolerable as nourishment, and unpalatable as a relish."<sup>11</sup> A clever stylist, she is often effective with her mocking taunts.

She is equally satiric and even more amusing when she speaks through her characters. The notions of the abolitionists seem wilder than ever when voiced by the coarse and ignorant Mrs. Hobbs, speaking to the question of how slaves, once freed, are to be educated: "Now, ladies, I'll tell you what's what!" chimed in Mrs. Hobbs; "jest give 'em their liberty, and let 'em take care of themselves! them's Mr. Hobbs' and my opinion. . . . I say, give 'em liberty — liberty or nurthin'! what's the use of nurthin' at all, if you don't have liberty!"<sup>12</sup> More amusing still is the talk between sensible Mrs. Cary and her infatuated mate. Returned from a trip to her home town, Cary has told her nothing. The fit is on him and he is thinking of slaves.

"Have you nothing to tell me of my old home friends, Mr. Cary? Did they send me no greetings? Neither have you told me of the meetings. I trust they proved precious seasons to the souls of all present."

Mr. Cary groaned.

"I hope no one is dead?" cried the lady, paling.

"Dead?" he reiterated, abstractedly, "no one is dead — so far as I am informed, your friends are in health;" and instinctively his fingers wove themselves into Indian wigwams, and his eyes returned to their peering into the flickering flames. A second low groan escaped him.

Mrs. Cary regarded him nervously. "Are you ill, Mr. Cary?" she asked, with a shade of anxiety in her voice; "pray, what do you groan so for?"

"Groan!" ejaculated the minister, now fully aroused; "Why shouldn't I groan! Why should I forget in my own personal comforts, the miseries of millions who are this moment held in cruel bondage. . . ."

"Mr. Cary," asked his wife, gravely, placing her hand upon his shoulder, "are you crazed?"

"Crazed!" echoed our friend, springing up and pacing the little room with monster strides; "Mrs. Cary, you are very obtuse! But it is the fate of man,

<sup>10</sup> *Ebony Idol*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.



perhaps his cross, that in his loftiest ambitions he stands isolated from companionship where he ought soonest to find it! In the great work before me I had hoped to be encouraged by your sympathy, and strengthened by your prayers!"<sup>13</sup>

Heroic Mr. Cary, suggests his wife, is behaving like Don Quixote.

The allusion is not surprising. Mrs. Flanders, of whom little seems to be known, disliked sentiment and admired the comic satirists. She ridicules Miss Dickey's "passion for 'tangled dells' and 'sleepy hollows,' haunted houses and old ruins."<sup>14</sup> To ridicule Cary, she shows him thinking and talking in terms of "A Psalm of Life."<sup>15</sup> Holmes, on the other hand, the contemporary poet with some satiric bite, she admires, quoting phrases from "The Ballad of the Oysterman" and "My Aunt." She alludes to no other contemporary, but mentions Pope, Goldsmith, Burns, and Sterne. Also, it is not unlikely that she knew Trumbull's *M'Fingal*. The theme of fanaticism, the tone and method of ridicule, and the tar-and-feathers episode suggest as much. A woman satirist with such affinity for the eighteenth century, writing in the "feminine fifties," is something of an anomaly. In its simplicity and directness and bold tone her fable is reminiscent of *Candide*. Except for its collapse in the middle it might have been a successful satire. Even with this ruinous flaw the book is a refreshing change from the conventional tale of slavery.

But this amusing satire is exceptional among the replies to Mrs. Stowe. Most of them, as they seemed to contemporaries, are incredibly bad.<sup>16</sup> Weak in plot, in character delineation, and in style, it is hardly surprising that such humor as they contain is undistinguished. The reason for the failure of these devoted writers lies in the literary condition of the South at mid-century. Accustomed to reading the classics and the romances of Scott, Southerners had made little effort to enlist the aid of literature in the examination of their culture. As a result they were unprepared to do so when the crisis required it. They seem also to have undervalued the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>15</sup> "He would arouse his people. . . . They should act, 'act in the living present.' . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 10). When his wife asks what she had better do, Cary replies, "Fight and pray." . . . 'Be up and doing! labor! we can all do something!'" (*ibid.*, p. 16).

<sup>16</sup> Said one reviewer of these replies: "All such attempts have already proved, as might have been anticipated, ridiculous failures, as far as they have been designed to stultify and falsify *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and divert from it the stern eye of public morality" (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, LXXIV [October, 1853], p. 423). A righteous Northern reviewer thought it impossible that a book like *Life at the South; or, Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is* (Richmond: n.d.) could be good: "Of course, it can hardly be expected that Mr. W. L. G. Smith's book will show many traces of poetic or philosophic genius. True genius rarely lends itself to such purposes. . . ." ("Literature of Slavery," *New Englander*, XL [November, 1852], p. 610).

power of the social novel. Certainly it was not a form for men; they would argue the legal aspects of slavery and they would declaim, but they would not stoop to the writing of propaganda fiction. Simms was equal to the task but refused.<sup>17</sup> So it was that the job of answering Mrs. Stowe with her chosen weapon, according to "the principle of *similia similibus* [*curantur*],"<sup>18</sup> fell to women writers, most of whom were amateurs.<sup>19</sup> They tried valiantly but without much success, and the South "paid the penalty for its inability to convince the world that Mrs. Stowe's picture was a biased and distorted one."<sup>20</sup>

## II

A few of the more temperate stories prompted by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* also sought, with some success, to liven their pages with humor. The author of *The Cabin and Parlor*, for instance, tried harder than some writers to make his negro talk not only accurately but amusingly. No more than his contemporaries does he render it as authentically as Mark Twain and Joel Chandler Harris were to do, but he is aware of some of the problems involved. "No one," he writes, "who is not familiar with the South, can fully realize how fond the negroes are of pompous declamation. . . ." The peculiarity of their vocabulary is not simplicity, but the opposite, and "its ludicrousness consists in the incongruity with which sonorous words, frequently misplaced or mispronounced, are mixed up with ideas the most bald. Tony was a master of this art, and therefore in high favor."<sup>21</sup> Tony's rhetorical prowess enables him to lord it over his plainer speaking fellows in a way that makes for some fairly diverting scenes. The mangling or misapplying of polysyllables, however, was becoming a stock feature of the talk of the comic negro, and Peterson was

<sup>17</sup> "[Simms] had been requested by a Philadelphia firm to write a romance of Southern life which should serve as an answer to [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*]; but he had shown his good sense by declining to give any such opportunity to the world at large to indulge in invidious comparisons" (William P. Trent, *William Gilmore Simms*, American Men of Letters Series [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1892], p. 175).

<sup>18</sup> *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, I (January, 1853), p. 100.

<sup>19</sup> One innocent author, attempting to publish her manuscript, argued that every reader of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ". . . would be anxious to hear the other side of the story. . . ." and since her romance was ". . . the silver lining of the Southern institution, she came to a publisher with a modest proposal based upon a certain sale of one hundred and fifty thousand copies of her work" (*ibid.*).

<sup>20</sup> Jay B. Hubbell, *The South in American Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1954), p. 386.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Jacobs Peterson [pseud., "J. Thornton Randolph"], *The Cabin and Parlor; or, Slaves and Masters Northward* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1852), p. 78. This book was adapted for the stage and produced in Philadelphia in 1854. See Harry Birdoff, *The World's Greatest Hit: Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: S. F. Vanni, 1947), p. 108.

only exploiting more fully a device common to several writers of dialect.

Another humorous character type to appear in the novels of slavery was the Yankee, whose virtues or his knavery were emphasized according to the writer's purpose and sectional bias. *Cousin Franck's Household*, a mildly critical portrayal of plantation slavery, presents Caleb Cutts as a Yankee overseer. Like his fictional and dramatic predecessors, Cutts has peddled tin-ware and Connecticut clocks, and later invaded the South, where he is said to have been the first to introduce wooden hams to the market. He is no villain, yet he likes being overseer, until, while helping the planter recover some runaway slaves, he himself is caught and jailed for a runaway. The author does not show him in his plight, but records the letter he writes the planter for help.

dere doctor . . . ime in a curis piccle an kno mistak ime shot up in hartlund  
Kourt howse jale Acused of bein a Runaway Salve! i tells em ime kurnel Cutts  
rokesby overseer but thair wont knoboddy bleeve a word I sa. the galer is  
crosser thun a Pak ov mad dogs an ime enny gist ded. . . i wist i was saf bak  
tew rokesby I dew this ere Is a losin bizniss. Dew cum arter me tew wonst  
dere doctur, an ile dew az much fur yew The fust time i gets A chans.<sup>22</sup>

Cutts talks better than he writes; but although his speech is properly regional, it lacks the wit that spices the talk of Sam Slick and Hosea Biglow.

A better realized Yankee appears briefly in *English Serfdom and American Slavery*,<sup>23</sup> by Lucien B. Chase, U. S. Congressman (1848-52) from Tennessee. A story of human suffering under the English social system, it shows the plight of tenants of the gentry, poor city-dwellers, factory hands, laboring women and children, and impressed seamen. To this misery the aristocracy is blind, although they take a lively interest in the welfare of the American negro. The author scores them for their pharisaism and charges them with encouraging American Abolitionists in the hope of causing dissension and embarrassing popular government.<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>22</sup> Emily Clemens Pearson [pseud., "Pocahontas"], *Cousin Franck's Household, or Scenes in the Old Dominion* (Boston: Ford & Olmstead, 1853), p. 148.

<sup>23</sup> (New York: H. Long & Brother, 1854).

<sup>24</sup> Although Britain later sympathized with the Confederacy, in the '50's much British opinion favored Abolition. Since Britain had abolished slavery in its West Indian colonies in 1833, many Englishmen — reformers like Bright and Cobden, poor laborers, and such aristocrats as Lord Shaftesbury and the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland — became interested in emancipation in the United States. A triangle of criticism resulted: the British goaded the North, the North reproved the South, and the South in turn denounced the British. That the British aristocracy, as alleged by Chase and by Mayne Reid (*The Quadroon; or, A Lover's Adventures in Louisiana*, 3 Volumes [London: 1856], III, p. 272), was deliberately conspiring to weaken the government that was becoming a threat to privilege everywhere is doubtful. (See, e.g., Frank J. Klingberg, "Harriet Beecher Stowe and Social Reform in England," *American Historical Review*, XLIII [April, 1938],

contrast implied in the book's title is rather one-sided, for the conditions of American negro slaves are touched on only as they are described, late in the story, by a visiting U. S. senator, who shows them to be better than those of British freemen. A more picturesque representative of America enters the story in the person of Ezekiel Belknap, a Yankee sailor, who helps a long-suffering Englishman to elude his persecutors and escape to America. Like the senator, he defends his country against British criticism, boasting not of the happy lot of the slaves, but of the American's independence that refuses to abase itself before authority. When asked whether American public officials ever violate campaign pledges, Ezekiel replies:

Why you see, Mr. Kane, there *is* some skunks, that have the meanness tew set up fur theirsels arter election is over. Their as perlite as a basket of chips while they are asking the people for their votes; but, once elected, and the horse is another color. Now, there is the president; he don't let on much during the contest, when everybody else is a ripping and tearing the hull time; but his silence is amazin' discreet, for he says jist nothing, calkerlated to spile the exertions of his friends and his own chances. When he gits elected, he holds his head jist as high as ary king in all Christendom. He takes the executive bit atween his teeth, and goes it rough-shod straight over democrats, whigs, abolitionists, secessionists, and the whole cobboodle, until the people git riled, and then they jerk him back upon his hanches in a little less than no time. They are amazin' good-natured, are the Americans, when they have their own way, but once get their dander up, by tryin' tew dew as yer please, and they will yank yer up, standing, in a brace of shakes. Tain't no use tew try to ride them folks booted and spurred, no how you can fix it. It ain't to be did. They think no more of leading an unruly president out of the white house by the ears, and a kickin' on him all the way down Pennsylvany Aveny, as far as the De Pot, than they would of pitching into a skunk, that was a ciferin about a hen-roost. There was John Tyler, a good enough president — in fact, a fust-rate man — for he did enebeout right in a vetoeing them bank bills; for I guess they desarved no better than to *toe* the mark, and the people woulddent

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pp. 542-552.) But some pro-slavery novelists suspected such a conspiracy, or at the least resented what they regarded as pharisaical meddling. This feeling is strong in *Cabin and Parlor* and in *The Black Gauntlet: A Tale of Plantation Life in South Carolina* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860), by Mrs. Henry R. Schoolcraft, the Carolina-born second wife of the Indian historian. Ebenezer Starnes' planter, in *The Slave Holder Abroad: or, Billy Buck's Visit with His Master* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860), takes his slave to England, where together they argue that Billy's lot is preferable to that of an English free laborer. Billy says some amusing things, but there is relatively little humor in the book. This is true also of the novel of another successful Southern humorist, *The Master's House* (New York: T. L. McElrath & Co., 1854), by "Logan," pen-name of Thomas Bangs Thorpe. It is unfortunate that these two accomplished writers did not see fit to inject into their slavery novels more of the humor of which they are known to have been capable.

acared if he had kicked them as try'd so pesky hard to force 'em through. But because they thought they had a right tew call him a whig, they sposed he was bound to approbate the hull set of whig measures; that is, them as was whig measures, *then*. And when Captain Tyler wan't to be druv, and was bound to set up fur hisself, they commenced abusin' on him, and a cussen on him, until arter awhile no one thought it was respectable to speak well of Captain Tyler.<sup>25</sup>

Belknap is more than a humorous trapping in the story. His courage and buoyancy hearten the despairing Kane, and by speech and action Ezekiel shows him the way to independence and freedom. He enlivens a somber book; one wishes his creator had found more use for him.

### III

Failure to exploit humorous possibilities was not a sectional error; most Northern novelists were no more successful than Southern ones in creating comedy. Some made no effort to relieve their melancholy tales.<sup>26</sup> If they tried at all, it was usually by way of recording oddity of speech. In *Aunt Leanna*<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth A. Roe brings a New Englander to settle in Kentucky, with some resulting dialectal contrasts. Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, showed skill, in *Liberia*,<sup>28</sup> in rendering the talk of negroes with what a reviewer said was "much truth and humor."<sup>29</sup> In *The Quadroon* the British novelist of adventure, Mayne Reid, tells a fast-moving tale of life in the bayou country. Deploring slavery but careful not to take sides in the controversy, he writes primarily to interest his British readers in American customs and speech ways. He appended a glossary, and in his narrative he quotes overheard humorous expressions, such as the remark of a steamboat captain who declared of his boat that "all he wanted was a *heavy dew* upon the grass, to enable him to propell her across the prairies!"<sup>30</sup>

Quaint speech is a more prominent feature of John Townsend Trowbridge's *Neighbor Jackwood*,<sup>31</sup> the story of a Vermont family that shelters a pretty runaway octoroon. At least three fourths of the book is dialogue,

<sup>25</sup> *English Serfdom*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., Mrs. Mary H. Pike Ipseud., "Mary Langdon" I, *Ida May, A Short Story of Things Actual and Possible* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co., 1854), which sold some 60,000 copies; William Douglas O'Connor, *Harrington: A Story of True Love* (Boston: Thayer & Eldridge, 1860).

<sup>27</sup> or, *Early Scenes in Kentucky* (Chicago: Published for the author, 1855).

<sup>28</sup> or, *Mr. Peyton's Experiment* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853).

<sup>29</sup> *Graham's Magazine*, XLIV (1854), p. 235.

<sup>30</sup> *The Quadroon*, I, pp. 24-25. Dion Bouicault based his play, *The Octoroon*, on Reid's novel.

<sup>31</sup> (Boston: 1857). From the novel Trowbridge made a play that ran with some success in Boston. See Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1943), p. 289.



rustic talk in a fairly convincing regional idiom. The author has an ear for local sounds, which he renders in irregular spellings and contractions, and for local diction. But the result is usually flat and dull. What is missing is wit, the clothing of the shrewd observation in odd but apt imagery, which distinguishes the most humorous Yankee speech. Also, the dialect suffers from its very abundance. Not only does it tend to obscure the laconic quality of Yankee talk; after many pages such edge as it has is dulled. Trowbridge's prodigal use of dialect is an object lesson in the principle of contrast, used so effectively in the framework tale by Mark Twain and the humorists of the Old Southwest.

It would be possible to mention a number of other slavery novels containing humor, but to do so would not alter the impression created by the books mentioned: the propaganda novels of slavery, whatever their merits, are notable neither for the quantity nor for the quality of their humor. One of the most instructive results of examining several of these novels is discovering that they show by comparison how much better *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is, and suggest a minor but important reason why it was such a success.

The fabulous story of the publication and reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, here and abroad, is well known.<sup>32</sup> In general, reaction followed sectional bias: the South was outraged,<sup>33</sup> the North gratified.<sup>34</sup> Among sympathetic reviewers opinion was divided as to what gave the book its appeal. Many agreed with the *Blackwood's* reviewer, who, allowing it some literary merits, felt that "... they are by no means sufficient, of themselves, to account for the universal attention which it has excited. It is because ... this book has acted like the sudden flash of the policeman's lantern on a scene of secret midnight crime. . . ."<sup>35</sup> An American reviewer reversed this emphasis; one could not deny the interest of slavery as a subject, he admitted, but since there had been other slavery

<sup>32</sup> A good brief account is Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947). More detailed is Forrest Wilson, *Crusader in Crinoline, The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1941).

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., a review of *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* by [George] [Frederick] [Holmes], Professor of History at William and Mary College, in *Southern Literary Messenger*, XIX (June, 1853), pp. [321]-330. Howells later thought the fury of Southern reaction was evidence of consciousness of guilt. He also noted Mrs. Stowe's amazement at Southern indignation when it had been the wrath "... of the abolitionists she had dreaded, because she feared that she had softened the tints in her picture of slavery too much" (*Atlantic Monthly*, XLIII [March, 1879], p. 408).

<sup>34</sup> Some Northern opinion was critical, especially in Philadelphia. But it was the belief of George R. Graham that "the *coup de grâce* ... was given" the languishing *Graham's Magazine* by his unfavorable review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 3 volumes. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), I, p. 553.

<sup>35</sup> *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, LXXIV (October, 1853), p. 423.

novels, Mrs. Stowe's success must be due to the way she told her story.<sup>36</sup> Lowell agreed. "It is so easy," he wrote in a review of *The Minister's Wooing* (1859), "to account for the popularity of 'Uncle Tom' by attributing it to a cheap sympathy with sentimental philanthropy!" The anti-slavery element in the book, he thought, "stood in the way of a full appreciation of her remarkable genius."<sup>37</sup> Nearly all favorable reviewers felt that this genius included her mastery of sentiment; nearly all felt it included her talent for humor. Like Dickens, generally recognized as her model,<sup>38</sup> she blended the two, so that "one is often laughing with wet eyes."<sup>39</sup>

The comedy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* surpasses that of other slavery novels chiefly because Mrs. Stowe made more effective use of recognized comic types. Her humorous characters are more vividly realized for comedy, their comic actions are more closely integrated with the central action of the story, and the interactions of these people serve to compound the humorous effect.

There is much talk among the negroes at the Shelby plantation — amusing comment and banter among the blacks in kitchen and cabin.<sup>40</sup> But whereas the pro-slavery novelist was content merely to picture such scenes, Mrs. Stowe makes the slaves take part in the main action of the story. When Eliza and her son Harry, bought by Haley and doomed to be separated, escape and head for the river, Sam and Andy are enlisted

<sup>36</sup> *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, I (January, 1853), p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> Reprinted in Charles Edward Stowe, *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1889), p. 327.

<sup>38</sup> Dickens in the late '40's in America, wrote Henry James, was "the great actuality of the current imagination" (*A Small Boy and Others* [New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1913], p. 120). Many reviewers noticed the kinship between Eva and Dickens' Little Nell. In such comparisons Mrs. Stowe did not always take second place; the *Blackwood's* reviewer noted that "She probes human nature every whit as tenderly and truly as he . . . [and] her perception of the humorous is as quick and vivid as his own" (LXXIV [October, 1853], p. 401). There is evidence, too, that Eva owes something to pious Sunday School literature. See E. K. Maxfield, "'Goody Goody' Literature and Mrs. Stowe," *American Speech*, IV (February, 1929), pp. 189-202.

<sup>39</sup> Review in the *Boston Morning Post*, reprinted in *Littell's Living Age*, XXXIV (July, 1952), p. 62.

<sup>40</sup> Fault has been found with Mrs. Stowe's negro dialect, chiefly because it is inconsistent. (See Tremaine McDowell, "The Use of Negro Dialect by Harriet Beecher Stowe," *American Speech*, VI [June, 1931], pp. 322-326.) The dialect is not consistent, probably in part because the author was inexperienced, and partly because she wrote hastily; numbers 242, 251, and 259 of *The National Era*, where the novel first appeared, are missing installments of the story, suggesting the author could not always keep up with the printer. (See *Crusader in Crinoline*, pp. 262-265.) But the dialect is adequate to her purpose. As a contemporary put it, "But such inaccuracies are of little consequence, and are soon lost in the tide of humor, pathos and oddity that flows from the lips of the queer children of Africa" (*Boston Morning Post*, in *Littell's Living Age*, XXXIV [July, 1852], p. 61).



to help track them down. These two feign cooperation, but Sam places a burr under Haley's saddle and turns loose the horses, delaying the pursuing party and permitting Eliza and her son to cross the river. The humor of the wild scene in the field, and of Sam's successful ruse that foils the villain, is enhanced by the reader's sympathy with the fugitives.

Sam is an actor. Simulation is part of his nature. Given to mild oaths, he tries, not always successfully, to restrain himself in front of Mrs. Shelby. Also, in his mistress's presence, he "was always uncommonly fervent" and "made great capital of Scriptural figures and images."<sup>41</sup> And when Shelby scolds him for playing such a trick on Hailey, Sam senses that the reproof is half-hearted, but never lets on. It is as fruitless to pretend to be angry with a negro, says the author, as with a child. Sam, she writes, "was in no wise disheartened by this rebuke, though he assumed an air of doleful gravity, and stood with the corners of his mouth lowered in most penitential style."<sup>42</sup> That night Sam regales his fellow slaves with a graphic account of his heroic action. He dresses it up with "ornament and varnishing," for he was not one to allow a story "to lose any of its gilding by passing through his hands." His narrative manner is serious. "Roars of laughter attended the narration," but Sam "preserved an immovable gravity, only from time to time rolling his eyes up, and giving his auditors divers inexpressibly droll glances, without departing from the sententious elevation of his oratory."<sup>43</sup> Andy is charmed but confused, for he has thought Sam's efforts to help Haley were sincere. Contemptuous of such ignorance, Sam, finishing a piece of the chicken he has wheedled from Aunt Chloe, tosses the bone to Andy. "Thar, Andy," he says, "you may have dat ar bone, — 't ain't picked quite clean."<sup>44</sup> Expanding under the adulation of his listeners, Sam rises to rhetorical heights on the theme of "principles"; for principles he would be burnt alive. "I'd walk right up to de stake, I would, and say, Here I comes to shed my last blood fur my principles, fur my country, fur der gen'ral interests of s'ciety."<sup>45</sup> It is not hard to agree with the contemporary reader who believed that although Sam is "... visible in but a single scene, [he] is as well drawn as if he were the sole hero of the fiction."<sup>46</sup> Notable, too, is the fact that his comic role humanizes him in a way to suit the author's larger aim.

Better known and equally comical is Topsy, perhaps a unique char-

<sup>41</sup> *Uncle Tom's Cabin and A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, volumes I and II of *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 16 volumes (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1896), I, p. 93.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 98.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 99.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 100.

<sup>46</sup> *Boston Morning Post*, in *Littell's Living Age*, XXXIV (July, 1852), p. 61.

acter in slavery literature. She belongs, wrote her creator in her *Key*, "to a large class of children who are growing up under the institution of slavery, — quick, active, subtle, and ingenious, apparently utterly devoid of principle and conscience, keenly penetrating . . . the degradation of their condition, and the utter hopelessness of rising above it. . . ."<sup>47</sup> This is a fair sociological estimate of her character, but Topsy is also very amusing. "Lithe as a cat," dancing, tumbling, she reminds St. Clare of the minstrel favorite, Jim Crow. She steals and plays pranks, and when called to account, she lies shamelessly. Her "I'se so wicked" is her easy explanation for her naughtiness, which she gives with complete "command of her face."

The job of training this incorrigible imp falls to St. Clare's cousin from Vermont, Miss Ophelia. An angular, doctrinaire, but tight-lipped Yankee spinster, the good woman doggedly undertakes to instruct Topsy in reading, the domestic arts, and the rudiments of Christian morality. It is a losing battle, however, and in spite of Ophelia's resolute efforts it is only by Eva's love that Topsy is redeemed.

The comedy of these tutorial sessions is excellent. Miss Ophelia, a much more authentic Yankee than the long line of nutmeg peddlers, is persistent but finds her job frustrating. Topsy is amusing in her own right and so is Ophelia; brought together in a missionary experiment, the odd pair are doubly humorous. The comedy is enhanced still further by the presence of St. Clare, who has purposely engineered the scheme. He is amused with his cousin's tireless efforts to achieve what he knows to be impossible, and his gentle chiding adds a third comic dimension to a situation already richly humorous. But amused as he is, St. Clare has not given his cousin this chore for laughs alone. Like her pupil, this stern daughter of the Puritans needs educating. She does learn, with St. Clare's help; by confronting the negro as a living reality she is led to give up some of her pious and impractical formulas. In some of the most forceful passages in the book, more powerful by far than the melodramatic conflict of Tom and Simon Legree, St. Clare makes plain what too few Northerners realized: that the solution to the problem of slavery, admittedly an evil, is an infinitely more complex matter than mere emancipation. The spectacle of Ophelia and Topsy, with St. Clare plotting and enjoying it, is thus more than a humorous interlude; it is an organic part of the book's preachment. Mixed in this way with the serious matter in the story, Mrs. Stowe's humor far surpasses that of other slavery novelists.

The phenomenon of Uncle Tom in the theater is a story in itself.<sup>48</sup> An

<sup>47</sup> *Writings*, II, p. 297.

<sup>48</sup> See Harry Birdoff, *op. cit.*

event of importance in the history of the American theater,<sup>49</sup> it also must be recognized in a consideration of the novel from which it was drawn, because of the close association, even confusion, of the two forms in the popular mind. That many people virtually equate *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with Eliza crossing the ice is due to the influence of the play, not familiarity with the novel, where this celebrated episode occupies exactly one short paragraph.<sup>50</sup> For what George L. Aiken and other adaptors naturally did — without the permission of Mrs. Stowe, who thought associating her story with the pernicious theater would hurt the Cause, and also give people an unwholesome taste for the stage — was to play up those parts of the story that were good theater. This meant accenting the melodrama and also the humor. Comic roles were expanded, so that when a Tom show paraded through a town before a performance, Phineas Fletcher and Gumption Cute drew nearly as much attention as Eva and Uncle Tom.

The comic roles were also simplified. Topsy sings and dances, and acts out the pranks that are only generally narrated in the novel. Much of the point of her relationship to Miss Ophelia is lost, as the New Englander degenerates into a caricature, passing judgment on people with her stock epithet, "How shiftless!" The most interesting changes, for humor, are the alteration and expansion of the Quaker, Phineas Fletcher, and the creation of the wholly new Gumption Cute. In the novel Fletcher is a militant Quaker who helps George and Eliza and their son to elude the pursuing slave-catchers. He is a Quaker in the play, too, but by conversion; to win his sweetheart he frees his slaves. Earlier in the play he is a drinking, roaring, tobacco-chewing frontiersman, in whom the dramatist was able to exploit a comic type popular since Paulding's *Lion of the West*.<sup>51</sup> The implausible change from this boisterous role to that of quiet Quaker is instantly made, with amusing farcical results. But in grafting on to the Quaker another familiar humorous type, Aiken did not undervalue the incongruity inherent in a militant Friend. Fletcher's best line in the novel is borrowed with virtually no change for the play, where at

<sup>49</sup> *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was perhaps the first American play to fill the entire bill for the evening, the company at the National Theater in New York finding it unnecessary to eke out the program with jugglers or rope artists. Too, the play tended to break down prejudice against the theater; many respectable people, no friends of the stage, saw *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The play also is credited with being the first to introduce a negro character for other than comic purposes. See Bird-off, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 127-136.

<sup>50</sup> Edmund Wilson believes the reputation of the novel has suffered because of this confusion. See his notice of a reprint of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "No! No! No! My Soul An't Yours, Mas'r!" *New Yorker*, XXIV (November 27, 1948), pp. 134-141.

<sup>51</sup> Recently discovered. See James K. Paulding, *The Lion of the West* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1954).

the end of Act II the Quaker pushes the pursuing Loker down a cliff, saying, "Friend, thee is not wanted here!"<sup>52</sup>

Altogether new is the character of Gumption Cute, a role that attracted Joe Jefferson, John T. Raymond, and other talented actors. Inserting a "By chowder" at every turn, like Ophelia's "shiftless" and Fletcher's "teetotal," Cute as an unscrupulous but harmless speculator and opportunist is a broadly farcical stock Yankee. Most of his speculations, such as a scheme to exhibit Topsy, Barnum-like, in a show, and his effort to prevent Deacon Perry's marrying Ophelia, who he hopes will support him, are failures. His final speculation, however, succeeds, as he helps bring about the demise of the infamous Legree. The several comic characters in the play, it is clear, however amusing on the stage, are conventional humorous stage types, with little of the subtlety of their counterparts in the novel.<sup>53</sup>

*Dred* (1856), in which Mrs. Stowe continued her indictment of slavery, is also veined with humor. Among the negroes there is Tomtit, a cavorting mulatto rascal reminiscent of Topsy, and Old Hundred, who stands so much "on the dignity of his office" of coachman that he all but keeps the people on the plantation from using their own carriages. There is Nina Gordon's Uncle John, who hurls dire threats at his slaves but never touches them. Portraits edged with satire are those of Abijah Skinflint, the Yankee trader suspected of dealing in goods stolen from the plantations by the slaves, and Dr. Packthread, an over-nice, logic-chopping and muddleheaded abolitionist preacher. We get, too, an amusing scene showing a camp meeting, portrayed respectfully but with an eye for the ludicrous. These humorous bits are effective in their way but do not quite measure up to the comedy of the earlier book. Perhaps the reason lies in the more somber tone of *Dred*. As a contemporary put it, "... here and there the gloom is broken by the irresistible humor of one of the author's pet negro characters, but the momentary gleam only contrasts with the black moral thunder-cloud from which it issues."<sup>54</sup>

Although the humor in Mrs. Stowe's slavery novels has its own value, it seems likely that her two books were preparations for her later fiction. Her aim was hortatory, but in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* she created some fine comic characters who, interesting in themselves, were also apprentice work from which she went on to create her comic masterpiece, Sam Lawson.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> George L. Aiken, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, reprinted in Montrose J. Moses, *Representative Plays by American Dramatists*, 3 volumes (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1925), II, p. 648.

<sup>53</sup> The humor of Trowbridge's *Neighbor Jackwood*, when the novel was dramatized, was "degraded to mere farce" (*My Own Story*, p. 232).

<sup>54</sup> *Quarterly Review*, CI (April, 1857), p. 326.

<sup>55</sup> For a brief analysis of Sam Lawson's character, see Blair, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.

IV

In trying to determine why the humor of the novels of slavery in the '50's was of no higher quality, one thinks of the grim times. Whether one approved or disapproved of it, slavery was not a laughing matter. This attitude may well have kept writers from exercising such comic talents as they had. And yet by far the best book of the lot is often funny, not, certainly, because Mrs. Stowe did not take slavery seriously but because she did. Writing in the third person in "The Author's Introduction" to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the collected edition, she tells of her purpose:

Then she was convinced that the presentation of slavery alone, in its most dreadful forms, would be a picture of such unrelieved horror and darkness as nobody could be induced to look at. *Of set purpose*, she sought to light up the darkness by humorous and grotesque episodes, and the presentation of the milder and more amusing phases of slavery, for which her recollection of the never-failing wit and drollery of her former colored friends in Ohio gave her abundant material.<sup>56</sup>

It is clear that she had a shrewd sense of the strategic value of humor to her purpose. Talent she had, also, to carry out her plan, but recognition of the need to use it in that way was perhaps the rarer gift. Her statement of purpose is illuminating, and yet it does not do full justice to her performance. Insofar as her remarks invite one to regard the comic portions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as so many pleasant and amusing interludes in a melancholy tale, they are misleading. For, as this paper has tried to show, the humorous pages of this novel are an integral part of the author's statement on slavery. It is no accident that the best humor in all the slavery novels appears in the best of those novels. It is the best of them, in an important way, because of its humor.

<sup>56</sup> *Writings*, I, p. ix. My italics.

## Skedaddle

The shades of night were falling fast,  
As through a Southern village passed  
A youth, who bore, not over nice,  
A banner with the gay device, *Skedaddle!*

His hair was red, his toes beneath  
Peeped, like an acorn from its sheath,  
While with a frightened voice he sung  
A burden strange to Yankee tongue, *Skedaddle!*

He saw no household fire, where he  
Might warm his tod or hominy;  
Beyond the Cordilleras shone,  
And from his lips escaped a groan, *Skedaddle!*

"Oh! stay," a cullered pusson said,  
"An' on dis bosom res' your hed!"  
The octoroon she winked her eye,  
But still he answered, with a sigh, *Skedaddle!*

"Beware McClellan, Buell, and Banks,  
Beware of Halleck's deadly ranks!"  
This was the planter's last Good Night;  
The chap replied, far out of sight, *Skedaddle!*

At the break of day, as several boys  
From Maine, New-York and Illinois  
Were moving Southward, in the air  
They heard these accents of despair, *Skedaddle!*

A chap was found, and at his side  
A bottle, showing how he died,  
Still grasping in his hand of ice  
That banner with the strange device, *Skedaddle!*

There in the twilight, thick and grey,  
Considerably played out he lay;  
And through the vapor, grey and thick,  
A voice fell, like a rocket-stick, *Skedaddle!*

*Vanity Fair*



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Civil War Humor:

## The War in *Vanity Fair*

JAMES T. NARDIN

### I

THE EARLY YEARS OF A WAR AND THE PERIOD immediately preceding a war tend to produce some of the best war humor. When things look blackest, we hunt for something to laugh at and frequently find it in what worries us most; when things are going well, we do not feel the same need. Thus in World War II, Private Hargrove's problems of military assimilation appeared early in the war; Mauldin's cartoons of GI's were, in the opinion of many people, at their best when the war was not going strongly in our favor. Similarly, in the Revolutionary War, some of Franklin's best humorous pieces — "An Edict by the King of Prussia," "Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One," the letter to the Hessian Troops — appeared before the war and during the period before the tide of battle turned for us.

In the Civil War, the same trends of humor appeared. And in this connection, one particular publication offers an interesting case for study. *Vanity Fair*, a magazine patterned after *Punch* and *Charivari*, appeared for the first time on December 31, 1859, and ended its brief career on July 4, 1863.<sup>1</sup> This was the period of the most intense anxiety for the Union cause; thereafter, the prospect seemed better. Whether *Vanity Fair* expired because its humor was no longer necessary seems doubtful,

<sup>1</sup> This magazine was published weekly in America from December 31, 1859, until the end of 1862. In January and February of 1863, it appeared once a month. On May 2, 1863, it resumed publication again as a weekly magazine, and continued until July 4, 1863, when it ceased publication entirely. It is not to be confused with the magazine of the same name published in England from 1868 to 1928 or with the magazine for the hearth and home which was published in America from 1913 to 1936.



but the material it published in its few years gives us a chance to see what Unionists made humor of in their darkest period.

One of the commonest activities in any war is making light of the enemy. If we can make our opponents look ridiculous, evil, and futile, then our cause becomes lighter and nobler; laughing at an enemy has long been one method of trying to make them look so. The small-arms fire at the Southern cause ran from the beginning to the end of this magazine. Some of the firing was occasionally done with big guns, but for the most part, there seems to have been a conviction that for little people sniping was adequately destructive.

This humorous sniping at the South fell into two periods, the one before the outbreak of hostilities and the one after. If we recall the over-worked joke of World War II about the Russians' Irish general Tim O'Shenko, we should feel right at home when we encounter this item in *Vanity Fair* in May of 1860:

#### *All Afloat*

The Southern Delegates, at Charleston, rather than Wave their rights in the Convention, have determined to try a little Sea Session.<sup>2</sup>

In February of the following year, the patronizing pun was coupled with an attack on another enemy of *Vanity Fair*, President James Buchanan (always ridiculed as stupid, ineffectual, and dishonest):

#### *Hurry Up*

SILENUS says that if the Secessionists are going to break into the U.S. Treasury, they must hurry up, for after the Fourth of March they won't have any Jimmy to help 'em.<sup>3</sup>

In the same issue, referring to two representatives of South Carolina at the Montgomery Convention, *Vanity Fair* called the South Carolina argument purely "Rhett-Orr-ical."<sup>4</sup> It gave the message of the South to England as "Cotton to us."<sup>5</sup> It suggested that the Border States should remain in the Union because "Missouri Loves Company!"<sup>6</sup>

As the South became open enemies of the North, not merely potential ones, the patronizing air grew stronger; the tendency to laugh at the South as ineffectual increased. With mock grief, humorists lamented the fact that the Confederacy recruiting was going badly in April of 1861, that all the South could enlist was "the sympathies of the people."<sup>7</sup>

Puns were perhaps the commonest item in jokes about the South. The rule of the Southern Confederacy was referred to as the Dynasty of the

<sup>2</sup> *Vanity Fair*, I (May 12, 1860), p. 318. All subsequent references in this paper are to this magazine and will be identified by volume number, date and page only.

<sup>3</sup> III (February 9, 1861), p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> III (February 16, 1861), p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> III (March 16, 1861), p. 132.

<sup>7</sup> III (April 13, 1861), p. 180.

Seizers.<sup>8</sup> The "Corn-fed-er-acy's" persuading the New Orleans banks to "shell out" was referred to as "ear-say" with a grain of truth, which might be verified by ex-Secretary Cobb.<sup>9</sup>

Another standing joke through the life of *Vanity Fair* was the reference to the shaky money of the South. When the South at Mobile tried to get a loan, *Vanity Fair* suggested that this was a *Credit Mobile-ier* and that the banks should "let them alone."<sup>10</sup> Later, *Vanity Fair*, expressing deep sympathy with the Memphis "traitors" who refused to accept Confederate money for drinks, felt that no one should be expected to take more than two cartloads of such money for a drink.<sup>11</sup>

There were in the jokes in *Vanity Fair*, from time to time, evidences of greater indignation at the South than these quips would suggest. There were expressions of admiration for Jeff Davis, who was called an enviably impudent man because he could hold up his head as if he were the most honest and upright man in the world;<sup>12</sup> there was bitterness at the treatment of prisoners. But for the most part, the treatment of the South in this magazine was the treatment accorded to a ridiculous child who misbehaves, but is of no real consequence.

As might be expected, however, Britain came in for its share of attack through humor, since *Vanity Fair* had as its initial purpose correction by laughter. The reference to the cotton supply has already been mentioned; such references were frequent. Not only space-fillers repeated this joke with dozens of changes, but the cartoons made Britain hypocritically villainous. One entitled "Design for a Statue of English Justice. Suggested by Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston" showed John Bull holding the balance, with a bale of cotton balanced against a slave.<sup>13</sup> Another entitled "Principle vs. Interest" showed John Bull with a slung rifle, with a cotton bale from which a negro protruded. Over another pile of bales on which Jeff Davis was sitting, was the sign "JEFF DAVIS COTTON BROKER." John Bull was speaking: "My Colored Brother, don't be irrepressible, the unhappy condition to which the oppressor has reduced you, enlists my warmest sympathy — but then, really, one cannot know friends in trade."<sup>14</sup>

France, too, was attacked, along with England, over the Maximilian affair in Mexico. The suggestions always indicated that Britain would betray France, that the Southern cause was hopeless, and that England and France wished they were safely on the Northern side. Such attacks,

<sup>8</sup> III (April 27, 1861), p. 197.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>10</sup> III (March 23, 1861), p. 143.

<sup>11</sup> V (June 7, 1862), p. 273.

<sup>12</sup> III (May 25, 1861), p. 247.

<sup>13</sup> III (June 15, 1861), p. 277.

<sup>14</sup> III (April 13, 1861), p. 175.



DESIGN FOR A STATUE OF ENGLISH JUSTICE

via laughter, certainly were intended to bolster the faith of the Unionists in their own cause, at the same time that they may have been attempts to show the Europeans the wrongness of their own course.

But laughter at the opposition is like a Sunday sermon on the need of going to church; those opposed do not hear what is said and do not care; those who agree can pat themselves on the back, assured that they are right. So *Vanity Fair* would have little of importance if it had attacked merely the South and her European friends. Since the circulation of the magazine among such people must have been small, the editors could hardly have hoped to accomplish much change of heart among those readers.

## II

*Vanity Fair* launched its greatest laughing offensive at its own side, the North. It attacked freely what it opposed in Northern action and sentiment.

In the early issues of *Vanity Fair*, Buchanan was the greatest enemy. He was lampooned as being the tool of the New York newspapers, as not knowing whether he sympathized with the North or the South, as being dishonest, stupid, and ineffectual. One cartoon showed Lincoln armed with a sword labeled VOX POPULI about to sever the "Secret Service Fund" link between the Siamese twins Buchanan and Bennett; to his patients Lincoln said, "Don't be scared, my boys, 'tis as easy as lying."<sup>15</sup> By the end of Buchanan's presidency, the slurs were open: to the remark that some people were making, that Lincoln would turn out the worst president the United States ever had, *Vanity Fair* replied: "Too True. He will turn out James Buchanan! Ceremony takes place March 4th."<sup>16</sup>

From such a remark, one might well expect that Lincoln fared well at the hands of the editors, but *Vanity Fair* was not influenced in any way by later opinions of Lincoln. It could not and did not look upon Lincoln as we of the twentieth century do. Rather it reflected much of the contemporary reaction of the intellectuals and of the long-time politicians.

Speaking of the Chicago convention and the nomination of Lincoln, *Vanity Fair*, finding it the fizzle that many people then thought it, felt that the leaders of the Republican party had determined to commit party suicide and that nominating Lincoln was the strongest step they had yet taken in that direction. He possessed, the magazine said, certain characteristics which would go far toward defeating him, if there was any power in newspaper fun:

First. He is known by the tenderly-affectionate soubriquet of "Old Uncle Abe" — a good title for the Chief Magistrate of the United States of North America.

<sup>15</sup> II (November 3, 1860), p. 224.

<sup>16</sup> III (March 2, 1861), p. 107.

Further, he is a longitudinal person, with a shambling gait — a physical formation termed "slab-sided," in the Eastern States. Then he delivered a course of "lectures" — stump speeches in disguise — not long ago, through this region of the country, and charged twenty-five cents admission thereunto. If he ever gets clear of the name of "Two-Shilling Candidate" it will be very singular. He was defeated in a political contest in 1852, by DOUGLAS — a significant fact, should the Little Giant be nominated at Baltimore. He opposed the Mexican War, thereby showing a sort of contempt for the Spirit of '76, the Bird, and other Fourth of July deities. He threatened to "go to the banks of the Ohio, and throw missiles over into Kentucky, to disturb their institutions there." He has a thin, almost nasal voice, and his grammar is not so far above suspicion as Caesar's wife is reported to have been. These are about all the things that are known of him, good, bad, or indifferent, so far as the great voting mass goes.

Quite enough, however, of their kind.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the campaign, then, *Vanity Fair* continued to snipe at the "two-shilling candidate" and the "rail-splitter." It piled up conundrums like "Why is J. B. a greater man than Abe Lincoln? Because the former split a party, while the latter only split a rail. Remark by our Sporting Editor. All very fine but splits don't count in the game for the players."<sup>18</sup> As the election approached, columns were filled out with such remarks as these: "While the rails on our steam highways rest upon *sleepers*, LINCOLN'S political *rails* are borne up by *Wide Awakes*"<sup>19</sup> and Brown won't vote for Lincoln "because he thinks if elected, the Presidential office would be probably Abe-used."<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere, cartoons showed Lincoln promising to take care of the Fugitive Slave Law in return for election.<sup>21</sup>

Once elected, Lincoln was treated differently, but not much better, by *Vanity Fair*. He was lampooned as a frightened man selling offices.<sup>22</sup> As he started from Springfield to Washington, a mocking account of the journey was written by Charles Augustus.<sup>23</sup> Lincoln's home-spun jokes were burlesqued as not amusing, not original, and dull. Lincoln himself was treated as a petulant bumpkin, speaking either childishly or nonsensically to the crowd. He was ridiculed for supposedly being "in the colored tier" of a theater along with Horace Greeley,<sup>24</sup> for lacking classical learning — he was reported to have ordered a "*sine qua non* of Beans"

<sup>17</sup> I (May 26, 1860), p. 349.

<sup>18</sup> II (August 25, 1860), p. 109.

<sup>19</sup> II (September 8, 1860), p. 128.

<sup>20</sup> II (September 29, 1860), p. 164.

<sup>21</sup> II (November 17, 1860), p. 249.

<sup>22</sup> III (February 2, 1861), p. 55. Among the cartoons and quips, there appeared also Artemus Ward's famous letter about visiting Lincoln as he was beset by job-seekers. In such a context, this letter assumes new meaning.

<sup>23</sup> III (February 23, 1861), p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> III (March 2, 1861), p. 102.

and an "Ipsdixit of Pork"<sup>25</sup> — and for continuing "to measure with all the tall men who present themselves, and [because] in various other dignified ways [he] exhibits a full understanding of the grave duties which will shortly surround him."<sup>26</sup> His failure to make an appearance in Baltimore, en route to Washington to take office, was superciliously referred to as ill-advised cowardice.<sup>27</sup>

On the eve of the inauguration, there was a moment of kindness from *Vanity Fair*, much as Truman received kind treatment from most quarters at the time of his becoming president. One space filler referred to

Springfield Ill — Springfield always

Springfield worse — Springfield the day on which Mr. LINCOLN took leave of it.<sup>28</sup>

A cartoon immediately following the election showed Lincoln as a rising sun (with his face as we are accustomed to it), the air filled with doves, and James Buchanan as an iceberg (with the pointed head *Vanity Fair* usually gave him). The caption was "Our Great Iceberg Melting Away."<sup>29</sup>

But the honeymoon was brief. The rail-splitter's lack of eastern refinement soon brought forth the sneering pun that Abraham Lincoln was "a precedent for bad grammar."<sup>30</sup> His failure to effect at once the end of secession brought jibes about his lack of action:

It is said that President LINCOLN is quite ill, in consequence of the cares that Weigh upon him. This seems natural enough, for how could the duties of his administration be light, when his whole policy is Wait!<sup>31</sup>

Thereafter, throughout the remaining career of *Vanity Fair*, Lincoln was treated much as losing football coaches are treated today. The war was not going our way, and *Vanity Fair* had its own theories as to how to win it. When Lincoln was fortunate enough to act in accordance with *Vanity Fair's* plan, he was praised; when he did not, he was ridiculed.

### III

The President was urged to have nothing to do with Abolition. *Vanity Fair* considered Abolitionists enemies of the Union and attacked repeatedly such people as Wendell Phillips, Horace Greeley, and Henry Ward Beecher for being of that group. One parody of "Abou Ben Adhem" (entitled "Abo Bo Lition"), read

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> III (March 2, 1861), p. 102 and III (March 9, 1861), p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> III (March 2, 1861), p. 100.

<sup>29</sup> III (March 9, 1861), p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> IV (December 14, 1861), p. 262.

<sup>31</sup> III (April 13, 1861), p. 173.



ABO BO LITION (may his tribe decrease!)  
 Awoke one night not very well at ease,  
 And saw within the shadow of his room,  
 Making it mean, and like a stink-weed in bloom,  
 A devil writing in a book of brass:  
 Exceeding cant had made BO LITION an ass  
 And to the shadow he said, a little pale,  
 "What scribblest thou?" The phantom raised its tail,  
 And answered with a leer of sour discord.  
 "The names of those who own JEFF DAVIS Lord."  
 "And is mine one?" said ABO. "Not quite so,"  
 Replied the devil. ABO spoke more low  
 But cheerly still, aching to grasp his pen,  
 "Write me as one who hates the Union then."

The devil wrote and vamosed. The next night  
 He came again — this time a little tight —  
 And showed the names who served JEFF DAVIS best,  
 And lo! BO LITION's name led all the rest.<sup>32</sup>

Cartoons burlesqued the freeing of the black and the simultaneous shackling of the white man;<sup>33</sup> Lincoln was shown (favorably) complaining to a Minstrel (Horace Greeley) who was playing on a horn and accompanied by a monkey holding out a hat: "Go away you tiresome vagrant! It's always the same old croaking tune, 'Abolition, Abolition, marching on!'"<sup>34</sup>

So long as Lincoln appeared to be opposed to abolition, he was safe from the missiles of *Vanity Fair*, but as the prospect of emancipation loomed larger, *Vanity Fair* adopted its usual corrective method, laughing. From March of 1862, when Sumner's repeated petitions to the Senate annoyed the editors into suggesting that copybooks should now have a new saw, "Emancipation is the thief of time,"<sup>35</sup> the attack was relentless. Lincoln was lampooned as a keeper of blackbirds who turned them loose because no one would buy them.<sup>36</sup> Customers in restaurants reminded colored waiters that they had better hurry up their service and not forget their station in society "since the Proclamation set in,"<sup>37</sup> and two negroes exchanged the information that Jefferson Davis was going to "taliat" by declaring all "de niggers in de Norf States slaves after de fust ob Janwery next."<sup>38</sup> The method of Franklin's "Edict" lingered.

<sup>32</sup> V (April 12, 1862), p. 176.

<sup>33</sup> VI (August 2, 1862), p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> VI (September 6, 1862), p. 115.

<sup>35</sup> V (March 22, 1862), p. 140.

<sup>36</sup> VI (October 4, 1862), p. 163.

<sup>37</sup> VII (February, 1863), p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> VI (October 25, 1862), p. 204.



To *Vanity Fair*, dedicated to the Union above all else, declaring free the negroes in the South, which did not acknowledge Northern edicts, seemed the height of futility. Shortly after the Proclamation was issued, the editors did their best to laugh it into oblivion by the poem "Eureka":

We have found a way  
At the present day  
To fix the affairs of the nation;  
The magic pill  
For every ill  
Is — issue a Proclamation!

Pray, would you make  
Your enemies quake?  
No need of a flagellation;  
What sword and gun  
Have erstwhile done,  
We do with a Proclamation!

'Tis thus we fight  
In the cause of right  
For our glorious land's salvation;  
Our foemen fall  
Or go to the wall  
By strength of our Proclamation!

'Tis thus we save  
The suffering slave  
On the distant rice-plantation,  
And though his chain  
Unloosed remain,  
He is free by Proclamation!

Oh! some may sing  
That "Cotton is King,"  
Or Corn, for a variation;  
In our new school  
We own no rule  
But that of the Proclamation!

Though the flag should go  
To the place below  
And the land to annihilation,  
Still, think we must  
It is fair and just,  
If according to Proclamation!

So let us raise  
 A hymn of praise  
 To the leaders of our nation;  
 'Tis plain that they  
 Will gain the day —  
 At least in a Proclamation!<sup>39</sup>

## V

There was consistency in *Vanity Fair's* attacks. Anything that hindered the successful fighting by the North was anathema to the editors. If the laughter at the Emancipation Proclamation was patronizing because such a measure appeared ineffectual, the attack on other matters concerned with the war effort was jeeringly bitter.

For the failure to support the generals who were trying to fight, *Vanity Fair* had ample vilification. The journal was filled with cartoons of McClellan, waiting for justice from the people,<sup>40</sup> rejecting the political hacks he had to accept as generals instead of real fighting men,<sup>41</sup> destroying gin, bourbon, and the like and routing intemperance from the army.<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to speculate what *Vanity Fair* would have done at this point had it survived until the time that Lincoln is reported to have said that he would be willing to send to his other generals barrels of the same brand of whisky Grant drank if they could win victories as Grant did. General McClellan is even pictured as destroying abolition.<sup>43</sup>

When Burnside ran into the same lack of support, *Vanity Fair* was just as staunch in his defense:

The Cabinet vowed "LITTLE MAC" was too slow  
 In the "onward to Richmond" pursuit of the foe;  
 And when MAC replied  
 That he was *not supplied*  
*According to promise*, 'twas hinted he lied!  
 And in "LITTLE MAC's" shoes they slid BURNSIDE, to show  
 How like seven-league boots they would speedily go.

A gallant commander is BURNSIDE confessed,  
 And to hurry the pace he no doubt did his best,  
 Till, by dint of good luck  
 And commendable pluck,  
 To Falmouth he got — but at Falmouth he stuck!

<sup>39</sup> VII (February, 1863), p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> VI (November 29, 1862), p. 259.

<sup>41</sup> IV (August 17, 1861), cover.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>43</sup> V (May 17, 1862), p. 239.

Now, "Why don't you press on?" this same Cabinet cries.  
 "How can I," says BURNSIDE, "without my supplies?"<sup>44</sup>

When the public began clamoring for a change of generals the following year, suggesting several substitutes for Hooker, *Vanity Fair* defended the president for insisting that the old broom should be used before a new one should be acquired; one poem on the subject of the broom-hawkers ended

There's a Hooker afloat, and a haven to steer to,  
 And Buoys that are marking the rise of the tide,  
 Nor will "Honest Abe Lincoln" your howlings give ear to  
 Until the old "broom" has been thoroughly tried.<sup>45</sup>

Public criticisms of generals seems a common activity in wartime, and in the attitude reflected here about the commanders-in-chief in the field, it is easy to see parallels with the Truman-MacArthur difficulties of the Korean war.

After the defeat of the *Merrimac*, the navy likewise received its share of criticism. One cartoon of a harbor full of sunken ships was entitled "The Wonderful Economy of Wooden Ships";<sup>46</sup> the cover of one issue portrayed "Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy," as "an Ancient Mariner whose mind seems to be giving way before the complications of modern Naval Architecture."<sup>47</sup>

But since the land fights overshadowed the sea battles, the Secretary of War, Stanton, was attacked more steadily than was Welles. Not only was he accused of not supporting the generals who might have done something with support; he was ridiculed for supporting men and issues that *Vanity Fair* believed he should have abandoned. General Fremont was one of those men; in a poem called "'Mother Goose' Stanton on General J. C. F.", *Vanity Fair* laughed at Stanton for bringing a dishonest and ineffectual general east after his western fiasco.<sup>48</sup> Earlier a mock advertisement had appeared, asking for information about a "Major-General, calling himself John C. Fremont," from whom no news, "good, bad, or indifferent," had been received. Uncle Sam expressed a willingness to receive information, "fearing that he has been foully dealt with, or that he has been dealing foully with somebody."<sup>49</sup>

When Stanton clamped censorship on war news in 1862, the cry of

<sup>44</sup> VI (December 13, 1862), p. 288.

<sup>45</sup> VII (May 23, 1863), p. 74.

<sup>46</sup> V (March 22, 1862), p. 142.

<sup>47</sup> VI (August 30, 1862), cover.

<sup>48</sup> VI (August 2, 1862), p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> V (May 17, 1862), p. 243.

*Vanity Fair* sounded like the cries of newspapers and journals in more recent wars, in particular some of the complaints over the release of information about our jet planes or the complaints of our soldiers overseas when Axis Sally told us how many men of what units were at Anzio and how many cans of beer had been shipped to them from Naples on a given day in the summer of 1944. The press continually complains that censorship keeps only our own side uninformed. So ran the complaint in 1862.

Stanton was lampooned as "THE GREAT (IN)CENSOR OF THE PRESS."<sup>50</sup> The North objected because "We're in the dark / And not a spark / Of light will STANTON give us"<sup>51</sup> while the South got all the news. The best of the attacks in *Vanity Fair* appeared in a poem called "The Censorship":

The beauty of the Censorship is this — good people mark it —  
It blindfolds all the loyal North and stuffs our ears with cotton,  
And while, as upon tenter-hooks, it leaves us in the dark, it  
Allows the traitrous South to get the news they need to plot on.

It exercises strict police o'er all our lightning high lines,  
And gags to silence absolute five hundred patriot journals,  
While under ground, by day and night, are worked the Southern spy lines,  
Transmitting each important fact to Rebeldom's diurnals.

The doings of our Northern hosts we learn from Southern sources,  
Through them we get the whereabouts of all our gallant war folk;  
The very hour when BUELL's host neared GRANT's outnumbered forces,  
We first knew by a flag of truce from better posted Norfolk.

So please you Minister of War, remove the vain restriction,  
We know you for a statesman shrewd, with all the "late improvements";  
But do not leave the patriot North to fancy and to fiction,  
While Treason gets the earliest hints of all the loyal movements.

MCCLELLAN, had you KENNEDY and his police detective,  
They'd stop full soon JEFF's private mail from this side the Potomac;  
Not through the *press* does Dixie learn your purposes prospective,  
Look out for traitors nearer home 'tis *they* inform the foe, MAC.

A halter for each Judas knave, but for the press no fetters;  
Guard well the lines, see no false friends with rebels hold communion;  
Death to all spies, a felon's death, and death to their abettors,  
But let alone the Fourth Estate, the bulwark of the Union.<sup>52</sup>

Not only were those who passed information across battle lines considered traitors, but the Peace Democrats or Copperheads were likewise considered dangerous traitors to the Union cause. Issue after issue carried

<sup>50</sup> V (May 17, 1862), cover.

<sup>51</sup> VI (July 19, 1862), p. 30.

<sup>52</sup> V (April 19, 1862), p. 195.

"Copperhead Lyrics" attacking Fernando Wood and Clement Vallandigham. A cartoon of Vallandigham as "The Last New Copper" showed a penny which was "called in by the Government as being too bogus for general circulation."<sup>53</sup> Another showed a Copperhead lawyer in a burning house, with firemen ready to fight the blaze; Mr. Copperhead complained: "I know my house is on fire, just as well as you do. If you want to save it play on it from the outside as much as you choose, but I deny your right to enter without my permission; my house is my castle, and any attempt to enter it by force is clearly un-con-sti-tu-tion-al."<sup>54</sup> The absurdity of such a stand was made even more explicit in the Copperhead Platform, purported to be a "true and reliable statement of the principles professed by the new party." The absurd contradictions in this "platform" make clear *Vanity Fair's* attitude toward the Copperheads:

- I. The Constitution as it is, and the Union as it might, could, would, or shouldn't have been.
- II. An armistice of twelve years, for deliberation.
- III. The Union, at all hazards.
- IV. A new Confederation of States, comprising all but New-England.
- V. A vigorous persecution of the War.
- VI. The peaceful departure of our wayward sisters.
- VII. A military dictatorship for some man who is "coming."
- VIII. An armistice and alliance of one year, to enable the belligerents to capture Canada.
- IX. Unconditional restauration of the Union.
- X. A request for mediation from France and England.
- XI. A Commission appointed from North and South, without cessation of hostilities.
- XII. Resignation of the present Administration, and appointment of a provisional Assembly instead.
- XIII. The Union forever.
- XIV. Abolition of Anti-Slavery.
- XV. Vigorous procrastination of the War.
- XVI. Repeal of the Sunday liquor law.
- XVII. The integrity of Habeas Corpus.
- XVIII. The Union before the Nigger.
- XIX. Speedy recognition of the Southern Confederacy.
- XX. The Union.<sup>55</sup>

With such a burlesque of the Copperheads, one can imagine how *Vanity Fair* would have reacted to provisions for conscientious objectors, to the Morgenthau plan, or to the armistice negotiations in Korea.

To *Vanity Fair*, devoted as it was to fighting and beating the South, the draft seemed a welcome move. *Vanity Fair* observed the physiological

<sup>53</sup> VII (May 30, 1863). p. 86.

<sup>54</sup> VII (May 2, 1863), p. 39.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

phenomenon that "notwithstanding the saying of physicians, that perspiration is frequently checked by a Draught, we notice that since a Draft has been talked of, a good many able-bodied men are getting in a sweat about it."<sup>56</sup> It agreed emphatically with the Adjutant General's decision that "Students are not exempt from a Draft. We never thought that they were. Look at the Beer they drink! Look at their Drafts upon their Governors' pockets. Exempt! We should think not."<sup>57</sup> The age-old brag-gart warriors were eulogized as "eleventh-hour patriots" who would not like to be drafted because the draftee would find his lot more than "average rough" but would brave the storm as a volunteer "when the Bounty is high enough."<sup>58</sup> Other wars have brought men who did not want to be drafted as infantrymen but volunteered for desk jobs.

The Washington men who were lampooned for being exempt in the recent wars were paralleled in the 1860's by the men who were shown wearing patches over their eyes lest they be thought slackers.<sup>59</sup> Cartoons showed men dining in style at Delmonico's while others ate miserably from a pail in the field.<sup>60</sup> The civilian-soldier contrast has always been good for satire in war time.

Other recurrent complaints were to be found in *Vanity Fair's* attacks in the Civil War years. The bankers were looked upon as selfish and unpatriotic men who could not see that their own welfare was the same as the nation's and who preferred letting the Treasury smash to lending it money. But *Vanity Fair* gave Uncle Sam the final laugh at them: "But spite of all your pesky huffs, / You'll have to take the notes, Old Toughs, / As 'legal tenders.'"<sup>61</sup> In a shout of hurrahs for their pet annoyances like Army and Navy red tape, they rejoiced in men like Chase, "who the National Credit has killed" and in "each partisan swindler and thief [the civilian contractor] / Who the Government leads by the nose."<sup>62</sup>

In contrast to the comforts of the bankers and manufacturers and of the slackers referred to as the Defenders of Fort Delmonico,<sup>63</sup> the magazine showed the delights of camp life. A cartoon pictured an enlisted man holding a blanket in front of him; his body was only slightly less visible where the blanket covered him than where it did not. The comment from the war correspondent was, "The new camp blankets are so remarkably fine, that many of our soldiers use them for fishing-nets."<sup>64</sup>

<sup>56</sup> VI (August 23, 1862), p. 90.

<sup>57</sup> VI (September 6, 1862), p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> VI (October 18, 1862), p. 191.

<sup>59</sup> IV (August 3, 1861), p. 58.

<sup>60</sup> III (May 25, 1861), p. 243.

<sup>61</sup> V (February 1, 1862), p. 62.

<sup>62</sup> VI (December 27, 1862), p. 310.

<sup>63</sup> IV (November 23, 1861), p. 232.

<sup>64</sup> V (January 4, 1862), p. 5.

An item labeled "Eight ounces of Salt Pork and a Cracker" made clear the attitude of *Vanity Fair* toward army food:

We cannot see why the purveying department of the Army should be called the "Commissariat," unless because the conduct of its officers compels us to Comiserate the soldiers; but certainly, in some regiments, almost the only rations the men get are Comiserations.<sup>65</sup>

The Army Contractors were hailed "in terms the reverse of applausive" and urged to

Come, blush for this beef that, with curses, the cook  
Of our mess to a bouilli converted,  
Such carrion perhaps, may be bouilli for you,  
Though you should be ashamed to assert it.

For supposing the meat to reply were allowed,  
When some diner of dubious digestion  
Inquired, "Were thy brows e'er with horns endowed?"  
It would promptly say neigh to the question.

The clothing was objected to because

So rotten, in fact, is our second-hand cloth,  
That to brace it we vainly endeavor;  
'Tis plainly, indeed, the strong-hold of the moth,  
But for buttons no strong-hold whatever.<sup>66</sup>

## VI

In addition to its major attacks, *Vanity Fair* had its lighter moments of poking less serious fun at war news. The susceptibility of the public to rumors was burlesqued in a series of dispatches concerning the whereabouts of Gen. Beauregard. There were drawings of the general in odd poses — he was pictured upside down alongside the caption "he re-turns to Charleston" and then right side up in the next drawing, labeled "he turns up in Richmond." The text of the item purportedly followed the manner of the daily papers:

Havre de Grace, April 26.

Gen. Beauregard was in Richmond at 23 minutes past 6 o'clock yesterday, and will attack Washington at once.

Philadelphia, April 26.

We learn on undoubted authority that Gen. Beauregard was in Alexandria at 24 past 6 yesterday, reconnoitring.

Baltimore, April 26.

Gen. Beauregard was in Norfolk at 25 minutes past 6 yesterday, and took a gin cocktail with several of the First Families.

<sup>65</sup> IV (August 31, 1861), p. 99.

<sup>66</sup> III (June 8, 1861), p. 265.



Havre de Grace, April 26.

I learn from a gentleman just from Mobile, that Gen. Beauregard is on his way North, with 150,000 troops. Gen. Beauregard is six feet high, but will not join Blower's "Household Guards." Declines advertising the Household Journal.

Annapolis, April 26.

Gen. Beauregard was discovered in the White House rear-yard last night at 26 minutes past 6, armed with three large howitzers and a portable sledstake. He went away after reconnoitring pretty numerously.

Philadelphia, April 26.

I learn on excellent authority that Gen. Beauregard was in Charleston at 22 minutes past 6 yesterday, and had no intention of leaving. He was repairing Fort Sumter.

The people of Bangor, Maine, and Cape Cod, Mass., report that Gen. BEAUREGARD has lately been seen prowling around those places.

I learn that Gen. BEAUREGARD is within five miles of Washington.

The report in some of your contemporaries that Gen. BEAUREGARD is within five miles of Washington is utterly without foundation. Sensation dispatches in times like these cannot be too strongly deprecated. The public will invariably find my dispatches reliable and can always find out all about Gen. BEAUREGARD by buying VANITY FAIR. Price 6 cents.<sup>67</sup>

On another occasion the editors made fun of a navy order, much in the manner which twentieth-century readers have become accustomed to in the *New Yorker's* "Talk of the Town":

An order has been issued by the Secretary of the Navy, prohibiting sailors from using, henceforth, the expression "shiver my timbers," which is no longer considered applicable now that wooden war-ships are doomed to extinction. It will be necessary, of course, to furnish an equivalent for the phrase, and we are informed that Mr. Welles is at work day and night, incubating for one, but as yet without any prospect of success. "Flummux my rivets," was proposed by a clever young man belonging to the Bureau, but thrown overboard by the Secretary on the ground that the word "flummux" is difficult of pronunciation during the process of masticating the soothing quid. It is a very serious business, this is, Mr. Welles, and you must lose no time in supplying a nervous substitute for "shiver my timbers" or else the public shall know the reason why. Jack would be a "dull boy," indeed, if deprived of his expressive vocabulary, and left destitute of any formula applicable to the destruction or "shivering" of limbs which can no longer be alluded to in metaphors "drawn from wood."<sup>68</sup>

Some of the humor in *Vanity Fair* was sustained over a longer period, not made up merely of isolated pieces. The tradition of humor has long fostered comic characters, and *Vanity Fair* had its share of them, too. Certain comic or fool characters whose writings appeared recurrently through the issues of this magazine must have been anticipated with

<sup>67</sup> III (May 4, 1861), p. 210.

<sup>68</sup> V (April 26, 1862), p. 202.

something of the same eagerness that awaits a new piece by Thurber, White, or Perelman today.

The letters of Charles Augustus on Lincoln's journey from Springfield to Washington have already been mentioned. Another comic figure in *Vanity Fair* was Ernest Emithed, who received Lincoln's thanks and praise for providing him with a proclamation which declared all Confederate soldiers prisoners of war of the United States. On that occasion, Lincoln avowed, according to Ernest, that his own proclamation extinguished the cause of the war, whereas Emithed's "ended up the war."<sup>60</sup>

Most famous of the comic figures in *Vanity Fair* was unquestionably Artemus Ward. His series of letters — on such subjects as the Confederacy, Secretary of the Navy Welles, Lincoln's troubles with job seekers after the election — originally appeared in *Vanity Fair*. In fact, in the course of these three and a half years, he ranged over many of the issues we find satirized in other cartoons and articles in this magazine; he treated them all with the same bad spelling, bad grammar, and horse-sense satire. Interesting as Artemus Ward's letters may be in themselves, they have a particular interest when they are considered in connection with the rest of the magazine, for they become part of a pattern, not isolated bits of humor.

Even more frequent in his appearances in these pages was Commander McArone, who submitted "war correspondence" for nearly every number after the war began. In the role of a credulous man, he made fun of nearly every issue that arose. He belongs to the long line of "fool" characters whose matter-of-factness in the face of absurdity is one of the most dependable sources of humor in every age. In the course of reporting a failure to meet Gen. Beauregard in battle, for which failure he reported that "Gen Beauregard was greatly disappointed by my want of punctuality," he submitted this report:

The battle that I described in my last is supposed to have been much more disastrous than was reported. Owing, however, to the flat refusal of all the officers to make any official statement, it is utterly impossible to get any details. The following is the only list of killed and wounded that has been made out:

Name.		Regiment
John Smith,	(killed)	Four hundredth.
Wm. Jones,	" and wounded	Fiftieth.
Unknown,	(unknown)	Tenth.
Saml. Brown	killed (fatally)	Eightieth.
John . . . . .	(neither)	Unknown.
. . . . . Robinson	(killed) slightly	Two thousandth.
H. W. Beecher	unhurt	None.
C. Blown	shot in the neck	Second.
Private Sears	Missing	Twelfth.
Others,	not much hurt	Various.

<sup>60</sup> VI (November 1, 1862), p. 210.

This list is not regarded as entirely correct. All of the men mentioned, however, are at the hospital, and are doing well.<sup>70</sup>

Such a report is in the best tradition of American humor, straightfaced absurdity reported by a fool who has no sense of humor and hence fails to see the preposterousness of what he is reporting. At the same time, the humor is not purposeless, for the inclusion of H. W. Beecher in a supposed list of casualties is part of *Vanity Fair's* continuing attack on him as a vociferous and useless non-combatant.

## VII

And so *Vanity Fair* pursued its course throughout the black years of the Civil War. It had stated in its opening issue its purpose to fight for the Union and to use mirth as its weapon. "The one great panacea for social and political evils is mirth. Hence, the two most powerful reform papers in the world are *Punch* and *Charivari*."<sup>71</sup>

*Vanity Fair*, accordingly, laughed at Buchanan, at Lincoln (when he seemed to be letting the South win), at Horace Greeley, Henry Ward Beecher, James Gordon Bennett, emancipation, Copperheads, army contractors, British hypocrisy, French meddling, draft dodging; in short, they opposed anything actively or passively opposed to preserving the Union.

What *Vanity Fair* might have laughed at in the latter half of the war remains conjecture, for just as the North began to win, it ceased publication entirely. Paper shortages had reduced it to a monthly magazine in January and February of 1863, and there were no issues in March or April that year. So in that last year of publication, it had little chance for operation. But while it survived, most of its pages were devoted to correcting what it saw as wrong in the social and political existence of America in the early 1860's, and the correction was to be done through laughter with such items as this:

### WE THOUGHT NOT.

The *Herald* offers to "OLD ABE," in the event of his being driven from Washington by the Cc's, a home at Fort Washington — "a pleasant locality, free from malarious and other unwholesome influence."

So it seems that after all BENNETT does not allow the *Herald* to be brought into his own family.<sup>72</sup>

Even *Vanity Fair*, however, took a few moments off from the war and politics. In the initial issue the editors had said, "Fun keeps everything straight except the human countenance and when that is straight, it is

<sup>70</sup> IV (July 6, 1861), p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> I (December 31, 1859), p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> III (April 13, 1861), p. 177.

because everything else is crooked."<sup>73</sup> To have included only the political scene in its humor would have been a failure to keep things balanced and straight.

Even as one goes through the pages of *Vanity Fair* now, the need for some relief from war becomes apparent. War intensity may be lessened by laughing at some of its hardships, but there must be complete escape from it from time to time. In 1941, one of my college professors, weary of the increasingly gloomy headlines of Allied defeats, remarked that he would like just once to see the tabloid headline "Love Nest Raided" and to feel that there was no more momentous news to report.

*Vanity Fair* must have felt much the same way when it ran as the cover of one issue a picture of a man, with his hands clasped in rapture, as he stood in a barnyard, looking at a bird. The caption read, "William Cullen Bryant As he appeared while enraptured with the lovely waterfowl to which he subsequently addressed a poem."<sup>74</sup> This cover was one of the few non-war, non-political covers in the entire year.

Such a desire to escape from the gloom must have prompted this space filler too: "The Great Literary Question of the Day. What will Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass be when they are dried and posterity has raked 'em — Hey?"<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> I (December 31, 1859), p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> V (May 3, 1862), cover.

<sup>75</sup> III (March 9, 1861), p. 118.

## THE CAVALIER'S SONG

I'm a dashing young Southerner, gallant and tall;  
I am willing to fight, but unwilling to fall;  
I am willing to fight, but I think I may say,  
That I'm still more in favor of running away:  
So forth from my quarters I fearlessly go,  
With my feet to the field and my back to the foe!

The life of a trooper is pleasure and ease,  
Just suited to sprigs of the old F.F.V.'s;  
No horrible wounds, and no midnight alarms,  
Should mar our fair skins, and get rust on our arms;  
Through the sweet sunny South we will tranquilly go,  
With our feet to the field and our backs to the foe!

I own twenty niggers, of various shades,  
Who burnish my arms for our fancy parades;

My horse prances sideways, curvetting along,  
And lovely eyes single me out from the throng  
Of dashing young Southerners, all in a row,  
With their feet to the field and their backs to the foe!

My sword is gold-hilted, my charger is fleet;  
I am bullion and spangles from helmet to feet;  
I am fierce in my cups, and most savagely bent  
On slaying the Yankees . . . when safe in my tent;  
In short, if I'm timid, I know how to blow,  
With my feet to the field and my back to the foe!

'Tis well for the hireling myrmidon crew  
To shed vulgar blood for their Red, White, and Blue,  
But when they've attacked us, we always have beat—. . .  
Don't misunderstand—I mean, beat a retreat! . . .  
And the grass, I'll be sworn, has a poor chance to grow  
'Neath our feet on the field, with our backs to the foe!

Then bring me my horse! let me ride in the van,—  
A position I always secure, if I can;  
For the enemy hardly can hit me, I find,  
While running away with an army behind,  
As over the ground like a whirlwind I go,  
With my feet to the field and my back to the foe!

Sometimes I put Sambo, and Cuffee, and Clem.,  
'Twixt me and the Yankees, who shoot into them;  
But when at close quarters, with pistol and knife,  
I find it much safer to run for my life;  
So the dust from my horse-shoes I haughtily throw,  
As I dash from the field with my back to the foe!

The Northmen, to catch me, will have to ride fast,  
Though I have a misgiving they'll do it at last;  
And it cannot be other than awkward, I fear,  
To find a great knot underneath my left ear,  
As up through the air like a rocket I go,  
With a beam overhead and a scaffold below!

*Vanity Fair*

*John Q. Reed made a thorough study of Artemus Ward for his doctoral dissertation at the State University of Iowa from which the material for this article was drawn. He is a member of the English Department of Kansas State Teachers College.*

*Civil War Humor:*

## Artemus Ward

JOHN Q. REED

### I

ARTEMUS WARD, WHOSE TRUE NAME WAS CHARLES FARRAR BROWNE, was one of the most popular of a group of native humorists who helped to relieve the terrible anxiety of the American people during the Civil War. Browne's Artemus Ward letters were widely printed in newspapers, his books were best sellers, and his comic lectures were the talk of the day. But Ward was much more than a mere clown; he was a searching critic of his age, and he made many shrewd observations about the critical period of history in which he lived. Although, for reasons which we can only guess at today, he took no active part in the war, he did what little he could in his writings and lectures to prevent the war before it began, to further the Union cause once the conflict was under way, and to promote national unity after Appomattox.

Born in Waterford, Maine, in 1834, Ward learned the printing trade and then worked for several years in Boston as a compositor on the *Carpet Bag*,<sup>1</sup> where his first attempts at humorous writing were published. After leaving Boston he first spent several years in Ohio as a journeyman printer and then he served for about three years as local editor of the *Toledo Commercial*. From Toledo he went to Cleveland, where he assumed a position as local editor of the *Plain Dealer* in November, 1857, and it was while working on this newspaper that he created the character of Artemus Ward. Adopting the viewpoint and style of his

<sup>1</sup> Information on the *Carpet Bag* can be found in the following two references: Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), I, p. 180; Franklin J. Meine, "The Carpet Bag," *The Collector's Journal*, IV (October, November, December, 1933), pp. 411-413.



creation, who is characterized as an illiterate but shrewd old side-showman, he wrote a series of letters ridiculing, usually in a genial manner, the overzealousness of reformers, the excesses of nationalism and patriotism, the bizarre aspects of unorthodox religious cults, the sentimentality which characterized much popular literature, as well as many other facets of the contemporary scene. These articles, which were widely reprinted, gained him an extensive audience. Leaving Cleveland for New York, he assumed, for a time, the editorship of *Vanity Fair*,<sup>2</sup> where he continued his Artemus Ward letters, and then he took to the platform as a humorous lecturer. After achieving phenomenal success for five seasons with his lectures in America, he traveled to England. There he penned a series of articles for *Punch* and lectured for a short time before he died of tuberculosis in Southampton in 1867.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Ward, who, like most newspapermen of the time, was strongly partisan in politics, lined himself up with the Democratic Party, and in the years immediately preceding the war his column in the *Plain Dealer* was filled with articles supporting Democratic principles. Strongly pro-slavery, he lashed out continually at the abolitionists, particularly the group at Oberlin College. In his famous Oberlin letter he began an attack on abolitionism which did not cease until the movement was a dead issue. Oberlin College, about thirty miles from Cleveland, was a center of western abolitionism, and the town of Oberlin was a prominent station of the Underground Railroad. It was said at the time that every Oberlin graduate established a station of the Underground Railroad where he settled after leaving the college. The story behind the strong antislavery fervor in Oberlin College is an extremely interesting and complicated one.<sup>4</sup> Charles G. Finney, the leader of the abolitionist group at Oberlin College, had been converted by the Reverend George Gale, who later founded Oneida Institute and Knox College, both of which became centers of abolitionism. Following his conversion, Finney started on a career as a revivalist and social reformer. One of his converts, Theodore Weld, decided to become a minister and enrolled in Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, which was headed by Lyman Beecher. Weld soon became the leader of about thirty or forty of Finney's other converts, and the

<sup>2</sup> For studies of *Vanity Fair* see Mott, *op. cit.*, pp. 520-29; Meine, "Vanity Fair," *The Collector's Journal*, IV (January, February, March, 1934), pp. 461-63, and Nardin's article in this issue of *Civil War History*.

<sup>3</sup> The only satisfactory biography of Browne is Don C. Seitz, *Artemus Ward: A Biography and Bibliography* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1919). E. P. Hingston tells the story of the humorist's career as lecturer in *The Genial Showman* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1870).

<sup>4</sup> For a summary account see Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1944), pp. 491-92.



group worked to improve the lot of the negroes of the town. Their activities, however, got them into trouble with the seminary authorities, and the antislavery society was broken up. As a result, the major portion of the Lane student body withdrew from the seminary, established themselves temporarily at nearby Cumminsville, and looked about for a more hospitable institution.<sup>5</sup> Finney came to their rescue by soliciting sufficient money from a group of wealthy New York philanthropists to establish a theological seminary in Oberlin College as a refuge for them, and Oberlin, already a manual labor college, agreed in February, 1835, to admit negro students.<sup>6</sup> The college subsequently became a hotbed of abolitionism.

Necessary for a discussion of the Oberlin letter, however, is a brief sketch of its background as gleaned from Ward's column during the preceding eight months. Ward first attacked Oberlin College in his report of commencement exercises at the college in the summer of 1858. In commenting on the college in a general way, he says, "The politics of Oberlin are unequivocally and fearfully Republican";<sup>7</sup> he then denounces the policy of the college of admitting negro students.

Ebony there has gone in on its nerve. In other words, and to drop metaphor and condescend to naked English, blacks and whites have mixed. But this sort of thing isn't carried as far as it once was. The blacks grow less and less at Oberlin every year, and there are those visionary enough to believe that the institution will be entirely bleached out in the course of time. We have no authority for stating that the Faculty are convinced of the impracticability and absurdity of attempting to educate the two races together, but it is strongly suspected they are, and it is known positively that many of Oberlin's friends feel this way.<sup>8</sup>

Just about a month later a violent occurrence at Oberlin again focused Browne's attention on the college. On September 20, a United States deputy marshal named Anson P. Doyton was enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law by returning John Price, a full-blooded negro, to his owners in Kentucky when a mob of college students and townspeople set upon him and freed Price.<sup>9</sup> Price went to Canada and was not heard of again. The mob, however, did not stop there, but threatened to burn the home of the deputy if he did not leave town immediately. This entire episode is reported in a fairly objective manner by Ward in his column.<sup>10</sup> Then on November 9 he records another exciting bit of news from Oberlin. Be-

<sup>5</sup> A detailed account of this whole affair may be found in Robert Samuel Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College From Its Foundation Through the Civil War* (Oberlin: Oberlin College Press, 1943), I, pp. 150-66.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168-78.

<sup>7</sup> The *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 23, 1858, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

<sup>10</sup> The *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 21, 1858, p. 4.

cause the deputy marshal had issued subpoenas for a number of the men participating in the rescue of Price, a mob fired several shots at his house. Ward further states that about forty Oberlin citizens are to be indicted by the Grand Jury for aiding fugitive slaves.<sup>11</sup> During the succeeding month he follows the development of the case closely in his column. On December 9 he states that fifteen Oberlin men have been arrested and ordered to appear for trial at the March term of the United States District Court. He has little more to say about the case until April, when he reports the trial. Although his criticism is never severe, there is no doubt from beginning to end that he has no sympathy for the defendants, whom he dubs "the higher law people."

It was during the trial of the "rescuers" that the Oberlin letter, a severe attack on the strong abolitionist sentiment in the college, appeared. In the guise of the old showman, Ward states bluntly at the beginning of the letter that it is his "onbiased opinion that they go it rather too strong on Ethiopians at Oberlin."<sup>12</sup> When "Perfesser Peck"<sup>13</sup> queries, "Mister Ward, don't your blud bile at the thawt that three million and a half of your culled bretheren air a clankin their chains in the South?", he answers, "Not a bile! Let 'em clank!"<sup>14</sup> "Perfesser Finney" (Charles G. Finney), who appears in the sketch, is portrayed as a very trusting and charitable gentleman who is simply being carried away by his overwhelming sympathy for the unappreciative negro. Ward's most scathing satire, however, denounces bitterly the policy of giving negro students the same privileges as those granted to white students. Ward continued to satirize Oberlin throughout his career, and there is every indication that his dislike for the college was genuine.

John Brown, a much more notorious abolitionist leader than Finney or Peck, caught Ward's attention just about a year after the excitement at Oberlin. On March 29, 1859, he reports on a speech which Brown had made in Cleveland on the previous evening. According to Ward, Brown, who was being sought at the time by both the Governor of Kansas and the Federal Government, had just returned from Canada, where he had taken eleven slaves and set them free. Brown's audience in Cleveland, Ward reports, was quite sympathetic toward him and passed a resolution approving of his course of action. Although he certainly does not express unqualified admiration for Brown, he does say that he is a "plucky man" and "the most fearless and honest Republican we know of."<sup>15</sup> Ward again

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, November 9, 1858, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Farrar Browne, *Artemus Ward; His Book* (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1862), p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> The reference is to Henry Peck, Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Mental and Moral Philosophy at Oberlin from 1851-1865. A zealous abolitionist, he was leader in the famous "rescue case" mentioned above. (Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 691).

<sup>14</sup> *His Book*, p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> The *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 22, 1859, p. 3.

mentions Brown in his columns of November 30 and December 3, 1859, in which he reports on sympathy meetings held in Cleveland at the time of Brown's execution.<sup>16</sup> Although an unsympathetic note is discernible in these articles, Ward's attitude toward Brown is certainly not one of open hostility. One gathers that he felt, like most people, that Brown was a misguided fanatic whose rashness brought about his own destruction.

Ward again attacked the abolitionists in April, 1860, in a letter entitled "Artemus Ward Encounters the Octoroon."<sup>17</sup> His use of the word "octoroon" was no doubt inspired by a currently popular play by Boucicault entitled *The Octoroon*, which was considered abolitionist in sentiment. The letter is an amusing account by the showman of his being duped on a railway train by a white man and a mulatto who poses as a freed slave from Mississippi. The couple tell the showman that they are desperately attempting to raise money in order to free the woman's eighty-seven-year-old mother from slavery. After he has good-naturedly given them fifty dollars, he learns that they are swindlers who prey on the sympathies of credulous people. The inference is, of course, that most abolitionists are innocent people who are being gulled by the negro slaves in the South.

When the whole controversy between the North and South reached a climax in the presidential campaign of 1860, Ward's column was filled with news of the contest. His comments on the campaign are in strict keeping with the editorial policies of the *Plain Dealer*, which unwaveringly opposed Lincoln and supported Stephen A. Douglas, the candidate of the Democratic Party. After the Democratic Party had split and the southern wing had nominated John C. Breckenridge, Ward vehemently attacked both him and his supporters. His first significant mention of Lincoln, which is headed "How Old Abe Received the News of His Nomination," is a fictitious account of the visit of the Republican Committee to Springfield to officially notify Lincoln of his nomination. Lincoln, however, refuses to see the committee immediately because he had promised that morning to split three million rails, and as yet he has not finished the task. Ward is undoubtedly ridiculing the strong emphasis which the supporters of Lincoln placed on his "homely" qualities and his frontier background.

Ward made his most forceful attack on Lincoln in a burlesque of the frontier sermon entitled "A Political Sermon: By the Rev. Hardshell Pike."<sup>18</sup> The theme of the burlesque is that Lincoln's qualifications for the presidency are exceedingly scanty. Lincoln, he says, has alienated the South and encouraged civil war by his contention that Congress had the power to exclude slavery from a territory.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, November 30 and December 3, 1859, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, April 21, 1860, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, August 4, 1860, p. 3.

Thar's fernatics and traitors and old wimmin in small dog's clothing a hold of Mason and Dixin's line, a jerkin' and a haulin' and a trying to sever that bully old cord, but my Brotherin', it can't be did, though ABRAHAM LINCOLN is cheerin on the jerkers and haulers as loud as he kin, and though he did SPLIT SOME RAILS IN ILLINOY AND BOSSED A ROARIN' FLAT-BOAT.<sup>19</sup>

He goes on to say that although Lincoln is undoubtedly a good person, he is "too small a man — too weak a sister" to be president. He praises Douglas very highly, stressing the facts that he has had wider political experience and is better known to the public than Lincoln, and that his policy of placating the South will prevent secession and civil war.

Except for a factual account of the visit of Douglas to Cleveland in September and occasional reports of political meetings, Ward had little more to say about the campaign. Evidently the results of the election had not yet been officially announced on November 11 when he resigned from the *Plain Dealer* staff because he made no comment on the election of Lincoln. After Lincoln had been elected and the nation stood on the brink of civil war, the preservation of the Union rather than abolitionism became the uppermost issue of the day, and his attention consequently shifted to the problem of secession, the policies of the new administration, and, of course, ultimately to the war itself.

### III

Despite Ward's hostility to Lincoln during the campaign, he treated him leniently after the election. In one of his earliest contributions to *Vanity Fair* he expresses sympathy for Lincoln and harshly attacks the Republican office seekers who are badgering him. Entitled "Artemus Ward on His Visit to Abe Lincoln,"<sup>20</sup> the article is an account of a visit which the old showman was supposed to have paid Lincoln in Springfield soon after the election. Upon his arrival at Lincoln's home, he finds the president-elect literally besieged by "office seekers," and when he sees how he is being tormented by these persistent applicants for his favor, the showman becomes enraged, and taking hold of one of the group, he reproves them severely.

"Virtoo," sed I, holdin the infatooated man by the coat-collar, "virtoo, sir, is its own reward. Look at me!" He did look at me, and qualed be4 my gase. "The fact is," I continued, lookin' round on the hungry crowd, "there is scacely a offiss for every ile lamp carrid round durin' this campane. I wish tharewas. I wish thare was furrin missions to be filled on varis lonely Islands where eppydemics rage incessantly, and if I was in Old Abe's place I'd send every mother's son of you to them. What air you here for?" I continnered, warmin up

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Vanity Fair*, II (December 8, 1860), p. 279.



considerable, "can't you giv Abe a minit's peace? Don't you see he's worrid most to death!"<sup>21</sup>

In January, 1861, just a few weeks after the secession movement had started, Ward wrote "Artemus Ward on the Crisis" for *Vanity Fair*. This article, which is comprised largely of a speech which the old showman was supposed to have delivered in his home town of "Baldinsville, Injianny," is a serious appeal to the remaining Southern states to stay in the Union. The showman assures the states of the South that he personally intends to "stand by the Stars and Stripes," and promises them that if they will send their extremists to Mexico, the North will banish its abolitionist leaders to the same place. The issue of slavery, he states, is not so important that it should be allowed to endanger the Union. As he sees it, the issue has been exaggerated far beyond its true proportions by the extremists on both sides.

Fellar Sitterzuns, the Afrikan may be Our Brother. Sevral hily respectyble gentlemen, and sum talentid females tell us so, & fur argymment's sake I mite be injooiced to grant it, tho' I don't be'leev it myself. But the Afrikan isn't our sister & our wife & our uncle. He isn't sevrul of our brothers & all our fust wife's relashuns. He isn't our grandfather, and our grate grandfather and our Aunt in the country. Scacely. & yit numeris persons would hav us think so. It's troo he runs Congress & sevrul other public groserys, but then he ain't everybody & everybody else likewise.<sup>22</sup>

Two months after the beginning of the Civil War Ward spoke out again to the South. In "Artemus Ward in the Southern Confederacy" the showman relates how, on a trip into Southern territory, he had an altercation with a group of "seseshers" which resulted in the confiscation of his show. Toward the end of the article Ward states rather clearly in the language of the showman the prevailing view among most Northern Democrats at this time. Although Democrats in the North had generally opposed the Republican policy of restricting the expansion of slavery and forcing the Northern point of view on the South in other ways, most of them supported Lincoln and the Union once Fort Sumter was fired upon by the Davis government on April 12. In the following discourse, directed at Jefferson Davis, president of the Southern Confederacy, Ward says that the bombardment of Sumter has solidly united the North behind the Union cause:

J. Davis, there's your grate mistaik. Many of us was your sincere frends, and thought certin parties among us was fussin about you and meddlin with your consarns intirely too much. But J. Davis, the minit you fire a gun at the piece

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* (This article was later revised and printed under the title "Interview with President Lincoln" in *His Book*, pp. 176-186.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, III (January 26, 1861), p. 37.



of dry-goods called the Star-Spangled Banner, the North gits up and rises en massy, in defence of that banner. Not agin you as individooals — not agin the South even — but to save the flag. We should indeed be weak in the knees, unsound in the heart, milk-white in the liver, and soft in the hed, if we stood quietly by and saw this glorus Govymtent smashed to pieces, either by a furrin or a intestine foe.<sup>23</sup>

"Artemus Ward in the South," which appeared in the next issue of *Vanity Fair*, is merely humorous and offers no critical comment on the war, but the July 6 issue carried "The War Fever in Baldinsville," the first of several articles in which he criticized the conduct of the war in the North. In this letter the showman tells of his return from his trip to the Confederacy to assume his duties as captain of the Baldinsville Company, a local unit of the state militia. Finding that he is in dire need of recruits, he gives all newly enlisted men the rank of brigadier-general after asking them the following questions:

Do you know a masked battery from a hunk of gingerbread?

Do you know a eppylit from a piece of chalk?

If I trust you with a real gun, how many men of your own company do you speck you can manage to kill durin the war?

Hav you ever heard of Ginral Price of Missouri, and can you avoid simler accidents in case of a battle?

Hav you ever had the measles, and if so, how many?

How air you now?

Show me your tongue, &c., &c.<sup>24</sup>

The satire in the letter is directed at the Union policy of recruiting whole companies of illy trained, poorly organized, and inadequately equipped militiamen. He is also critical of the excessive number of officers in these units, and he ridicules the typically pompous militia captain. Ward seems to feel that the policy of allowing these military units to become part of the Union Army will considerably weaken its strength and effectiveness.

It was almost a year later that Ward commented again on the Lincoln administration and the conduct of the war. In "Artemus Ward in Washington" he makes some observations on the personal idiosyncrasies of Edward M. Stanton and Gideon Welles, two of Lincoln's cabinet members, which indicate that he does not have the highest respect for them. He also makes several comments on Lincoln which might be interpreted as meaning that he considers him an inept executive.<sup>25</sup> In September of the same year he wrote an article which is extremely critical of the general ineptitude of the Union Army and of its incompetent, politically appointed generals. He refers contemptuously to the fact that instead of

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, (May 18, 1861), pp. 229-230. (Entitled "The Show is Confiscated" in *His Book*.)

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, IV (July 6, 1861), p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, V (April 26, 1862), p. 199.

fighting an aggressive campaign, the Army of the Potomac does nothing except protect Washington. He also criticizes the policy of the federal government of inflating the currency by printing "greenbacks" in order to meet the cost of the war.

There's money enough. No trouble about *money*. They've got a lot of first-class bank-note engravers at Washington (which place, I regret to say, is by no means safe) who turn out two or three cords of money a day — good money, too, goes well. These bank note engravers make good wages. I expect they lay up property. They are full of Union sentiment.<sup>26</sup>

A week later, in an article entitled "The Showman at Home," Ward again comments on the incompetency of the Union Army, which has suffered defeat after defeat. Although Lincoln had changed generals repeatedly during the first two years of the war in an effort to find a capable military leader, he had been unsuccessful, and the defeat of the Union forces seemed highly possible. The situation is so desperate, Ward says, that "unless there's different management right off, the American Eagle will have to disguise himself as a Shanghai Rooster and make tracks for Canady; while the Goddess of liberty will have to go out doin' gin'ral housework, at two dollars a week."<sup>27</sup> He then repeats his observation of the previous week that it seems senseless to station the large Army of the Potomac in Washington when it could be used to so much more advantage elsewhere.

"Ha!" cried the Editor of the Bugle — "a despatch! a despatch!" and he tore a paper from the telegraph boy, who stood in the doorway. "It's from Washington. Washington is safe!"

"It *must* be safe," I said. "I don't care whether there's a gun in Washington or not. Let all the men we've been sendin there for the past year and a half just lay down as thick as convenient on the outskirts of the town, and it will take the entire rebel army six months to climb over them! Yes, I think Washington is safe."

"The affairs of the nation," said the schoolmaster, "are conducted with signal brilliance."<sup>28</sup>

Sometime later during the war he severely reprimanded Congress in an article which was to appear in *Artemus Ward: His Travels* as "Things in New York." In this article he expresses the prevailing feeling of the time that Congress lacked wise and responsible leadership and that too much political influence was being brought to bear on the conduct of the war by members of Congress. The present Congress, he says, is failing to meet adequately the serious problems posed by the war.

<sup>26</sup> "The Draft in Baldinsville," *ibid.*, VI (September 20, 1862), pp. 136-37.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, (September 27, 1862), p. 147.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Gentlemen of the Senit & of the House, you've sot there and draw'd your pay and made summer-complaint speeches long enuff. The country at large, in-cloodin' the undersined, is disgusted with you. Why don't you show us a state-man — sumbody who can make a speech that will hit the pop'lar hart right under the Great Public weskit? Why don't you show us a statesman who can rise up to the Emergency, and cave in the Emergency's head?

Congress, you don't do. Go home, you mizzerable devils — go home!<sup>29</sup>

At the same time that he was assailing the administration, Congress, and the high command of the Army, he was also directing a number of rebukes at the civilian population of the North. Two groups in the North, the draft-evaders and the profiteers, particularly aroused his ire. In "The Draft in Baldinsville" the old showman speaks contemptuously of the citizens of his native city who are attempting to evade the draft. He says that because stage drivers are exempt, sixteen Baldinsville men have purchased the stage line between that town and Scootsburg, despite the fact that not more than a dozen letters are carried daily between the two towns. In addition, he relates, the editor of the *Bugle-Horn of Liberty*, the local newspaper, feels the overwhelming necessity of serving the war effort through the continued operation of his newspaper, and the local physician is trying assiduously to become an habitual drunkard so that he, too, will be exempt from military service.<sup>30</sup> In "A War Meeting" Ward ridicules the pseudo-patriots who hold meetings and make bombastic speeches about the necessity of fighting for the country while they themselves stay safely at home. The old showman narrates an incident which occurred during a war meeting in Baldinsville at which several such men were making flowery patriotic speeches. During one of the speeches the meeting was broken up by a group of Baldinsville women, led by Betsy Jane, his wife, who broke into the following tirade:

"You air willin' to talk and urge others to go to the wars, but you don't go to the wars yourselves. War meetin's is very nice in their way, but they don't keep Stonewall Jackson from comin' over to Maryland and helpin' himself to the fattest beef critters. What we want is more cider and less talk. We want you able-bodied men to stop speechifying, which don't 'mount to the wiggle of a sick cat's tail, and go to fi'tin'; otherwise you can stay to home and take keer of the children, while we wimin will go to the wars!"<sup>31</sup>

In "Artemus Ward to the Prince of Wales" the showman again castigates draft evaders. One man eligible for the draft, he says, has claimed exemption because he is "the only son of a widowed mother who supported him," and a number of other Baldinsville men have gone to Canada to

<sup>29</sup> Charles F. Browne, *Artemus Ward: His Travels* (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1865), p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> *Vanity Fair*, VI (September 20, 1862), pp. 136-37.

<sup>31</sup> *His Travels*, p. 20.

escape the draft. As for himself, he magnanimously says, "I have alreddy given two cousins to the war, & I stand redly to sacrifice my wife's brother ruther'n not see the rebelyin krusht."<sup>32</sup>

Ward returned to the theme of draft evasion in "A Romance: The Conscript," which is one of his many burlesques of the popular romances of the day, as well as a burlesque of contemporary popular songs. Since Philander Reed, the chief character in the burlesque, does not possess the three hundred dollars necessary to hire a substitute to fight for him, he flees to Canada. But Mabel, the girl whom he loves, deserts him when she realizes what a cowardly nature he possesses.

"None but the Brave deserve the Sanitary Fair! A man who will desert his country in its hour of trial would drop Faro checks into the Contribution Box on Sunday. I hain't Got time to tarry — I hain't got time to stay! — but here's a gift at parting: a White Feather: wear it into your hat!" and She was Gone from his gaze, like a beautiful dream.<sup>33</sup>

Overcome by Mabel's cruel treatment of him, Philander "unsheathed his glittering dry-goods scissors [he worked in a store], cut off four yards [good measure] of the Canada line, and hanged himself on a Willow Tree."<sup>34</sup>

In another burlesque entitled "A Romance: William Barker", Ward struck his most telling blow at the war profiteering which was so rampant in the North during the Civil War. William Barker, the central character in the brief narrative, is informed by the father of the girl he loves that he cannot marry his daughter until he has acquired wealth and position. Six months later William returns with a fortune which he has made by buying worn-out cavalry horses and selling them as beef to the Union Army. The concluding dialogue between the hero and the girl's father illustrates the bitterly satiric tone of the narrative.

"And now, sir, I claim your daughter's fair hand!"

"Boy, she is yours. But hold! Look me in the eye. Throughout all this have you been loyal?"

"To the core!" cried William Barker.

"And," continued the old man, in a voice husky with emotion, "are you in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the war?"

"I am, I am!"

"Then, boy, take her! Maria, child, come hither. Your William claims thee. Be happy, my children! and whatever our lot in life may be, *let us all support the Government!*"<sup>35</sup>

In "A Touching Letter from a Gory Member of the Home Guard"

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

Ward pokes fun at those men who have volunteered to serve on the home front in the event of an enemy invasion. He seems to feel that the members of the Home Guard, many of whom are living in luxury and serving no good purpose, should be sent to the fighting front where they are actually needed. The "touching letter" purports to be one which was written from a member of the Home Guard stationed in New York to his parents back home. The guardsman first tells them that although he is suffering for the "glorious Stars and Stripes," they should not grieve because other men are also enduring great hardships. He then reveals that he dines at Delmonico's Restaurant and sleeps at the St. Nicholas and Metropolitan Hotels, two of the most fashionable hotels in New York at that time. The obvious inference is that the young man is living an easy and carefree life while Union soldiers are being killed daily on the battlefields of the war.<sup>36</sup>

## IV

Two of Ward's letters written after the Civil War deal with conditions in the South during the period of reconstruction. In the first letter, which is headed "Artemus Ward in Richmond," the old showman tells of visiting the Rebel capital a few days after Lee's surrender. Much to his surprise and amusement the citizens of Richmond solemnly assure him that there was great Union sentiment in the South all during the Civil War, but that it was suppressed by a "rain of terror." One resident of the city asks him for an ambrotype of William Lloyd Garrison, and another is anxious to secure a daguerreotype of Wendell Phillips, the famous abolitionist orator. Since Confederate money is worthless, he is also asked continually by the people of Richmond to lend them money. The letter ends on a conciliatory note, however, when Ward advises a young Southerner that since the war is now a thing of the past, the North and South must reconcile their differences and work together to make the Republic even stronger than it was before the conflict.

"Young man," I mildly but gravely sed, "this crooil war is over, and you're lick! It's rather necessary for sumbody to lick in a good square, lively fite, and in this 'ere case it happens to be the United States of America. You fit splendid, but we was too many for you. Then make the best of it, & let us all give in and put the Republic on a firmer basis nor ever."<sup>37</sup>

Ward's final commentary on the problems of reconstruction, which was written while he was in London, concerns the question of how the lot of the recently-freed negro can best be improved. As the old showman is quietly seated at a bar in London, two British women approach him and ask for a contribution to a fund to send missionaries to the southern

<sup>36</sup> *His Book*, p. 239.

<sup>37</sup> *His Travels*, p. 92.

states to convert the emancipated negroes. The showman points out to them that since a number of southern negroes are starving, both from malnutrition and because of extreme poverty, their charity is misdirected. He suggests that instead of sending missionaries they should consider first the material needs of the negro.

"But I happen to individually know that there are some thousands of liberated blacks in the South who are starvin. I don't blame anybody for this, but it is a very sad fact. Some are really too ill to work, some can't get work to do, and others are too foolish to see any necessity for workin. . . Now, if it is proposed to send flour and bacon along with the gospel, the idea is really an excellent one."<sup>38</sup>

## V

In conclusion, it is obvious that while Artemus Ward's writings both fulfilled the need of the American people for diversion during the fearful war years and supplied valuable critical observations on a crucial era in American history, his general position on the twin issues of slavery and the Civil War was hardly a unique one. His severe attacks on abolitionism assuredly did not constitute a minority report, for though there was much feeling against slavery throughout the North, the abolitionists were, on the whole, cordially disliked in the North as well as in the South. Not only were the strong supporters of the movement, like many reformers, likely to be personally obnoxious, but their willingness to see the Union disbanded was resented by a generation brought up to revere with almost religious fervor, the Constitution and the Union.

Furthermore, Ward's attitude toward the war itself was typical of that of a great many Northerners, as was pointed out above, for most Northern Democrats, like Ward, remained loyal to the Union during the conflict. Numerous other Northern Democrats, too, doubtless concurred with him in his mild, but nevertheless genuine, support of the Lincoln Administration, in his sharp criticism of the Republican controlled Congress, and in his conciliatory attitude toward the South after Lee's surrender. His harsh attacks upon draft evaders and wartime profiteers most certainly expressed the sentiments of the majority of sober and responsible Northerners of all political parties.

Artemus Ward's reputation as a commentator on the issue of slavery and on the events of the Civil War years must rest, then, not upon any striking originality inherent in his basic attitudes and opinions, but upon the vigor, freshness, and novelty of his expression and on his uncommon ability to reveal issues and events in their true perspective during a period of intense ferment and confusion. Clear sighted and searching

<sup>38</sup> Charles F. Browne, "The Negro Question," *Artemus Ward in London and Other Papers* (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1867), p. 96.



criticism was badly needed, and there is every evidence that Ward took seriously his role as a critic of the American scene. His writings were widely read, and his constant pleas for sanity, common sense and moderation served as a much needed antidote to the fanaticism and hysteria of the Civil War era. Although it is useless to deny, in the face of his strong political partisanship and his attitude toward the negro, that he was bigoted and intolerant on some issues, it likewise cannot be denied that more often than not he attempted to be genuinely fair and objective in his judgments. It is true, of course, that as a literary figure Artemus Ward will be remembered primarily as a humorist, but it should not be forgotten that his role as a critic of his times was far from an insignificant one.

## WISDOM AT ROANOKE

A couplet slightly changed will show  
Why Burnside lost his boastful foe;  
"He that is *Wise* can run away,  
And live to fight another day."

## ONE CONSOLATION

The rebels mourn a sad defeat,  
That might have been completer:  
For Burnside, though he has a *fleet*,  
Must yield to *Wise* as *fleeter*!

## A NEW READING OF AN OLD SONG

Our army of Feds  
They lost the rebs,  
And couldn't tell where to find 'em;  
But "let 'em alone,"  
And they'll sneak home,  
Leaving their guns behind 'em.

McClellan so deep  
Fell fast asleep,  
And thought he heard them firing:  
But when he awoke  
He found it a joke,  
For still they were "retiring."

So up he took  
His sword to go look,  
Determined for to find 'em;  
He'll find 'em indeed,  
And he'll make the rogues bleed,  
And their wounds will be all *behind* 'em!

Bo Peep.

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Civil War Humor:

## Bill Arp

ANNE M. CHRISTIE

THE MOST POPULAR CIVIL WAR HUMORIST produced by the South was Charles Henry Smith, a Georgia lawyer who wrote under the pseudonym of Bill Arp. Highly effective as a satirist of the North, he supplied for his section an outlet for pent-up emotions comparable to that furnished the North by David Ross Locke and James Russell Lowell. Through the medium of newspaper letters written before and during his service in the Army of Virginia and as refugee with his family from the enemy when the Northern army captured his home town of Rome, Georgia, he "became the accepted mouthpiece of the Southern people in all questions touching the relations of the antagonists in the Civil War."<sup>1</sup> In addition, he pointed the way through humor to the correction or endurance of bad situations at home connected with the running of the Confederate and State governments and the Southern conduct of the war. In return for these services the South accorded him such popularity that William Henry Hayne remarked in 1882, "His letters first appeared in 1861 and were welcomed by a large circle of readers. During the war every soldier in the field knew Bill Arp's last."<sup>2</sup> And Henry W. Grady, Smith's friend and colleague on the staff of *The Atlanta Constitution*, could say in 1878:

I doubt if any papers ever produced a more thorough sensation than did the letters written by Major Smith during the war. It is true that they had a certain local pungency that added zest and that a pronounced sectional feeling inflamed their reception into a triumph, but they were funny in themselves and

<sup>1</sup> John Morris, in Edwin Anderson Alderman, Joel Chandler Harris, and Charles William Kent, (Editors) *The Library of Southern Literature*, 16 volumes and supplement (Atlanta: The Martin Hoyt Company, 1907-1924), XI, p. 4886.

<sup>2</sup> "The Tale Tellers," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 12, 1882.

they will repay perusal now just as richly as when they were fresh struck from the coinage of his brain.<sup>3</sup>

Among many confirmations of this opinion is that furnished in 1892 by the Gainesville, Georgia, *Eagle*, which declared: "For more than twenty-five years no man, not excepting Henry Grady, has had the ear of the Southern people as has 'Bill Arp.'"<sup>4</sup>

#### I. THE NORTH AND THE WAR

Had Smith not been extremely loyal to the South he might never have written at all. As the editor of the *Rome (Georgia) Courier* remarked on June 30, 1874, "His genius was born of our severest troubles. . . . His mission . . . was to produce the broad grin of humor and smooth the wrinkles of sad misfortunes." Stirred by Lincoln's order of April 15, 1861, for dispersal of rebel troops within thirty days, Smith, then a circuit judge at Rome, wrote

an answer to it as though I was a good Union man and law-abiding citizen, and was willing to disperse if I could; but it was almost impossible, for the boys were mighty hot, and the way we made up our military companies was to send a man down the lines with a bucket of water and sprinkle the boys, . . . and if a feller sizzed we took him and if he didn't sizz we didn't take him.

Smith later described the reception of this "answer" and told how he, on this same occasion, acquired a pen name from one William Earp, typical Georgia cracker resident of his home town of Rome, who had overheard the reading of the letter. He changed the spelling of the name to Arp as a partial disguise. This is his account.

I thought the letter was right smart and decently sarcastic, and so I read it to Dr. Miller and Judge Underwood, and they seemed to think it was right smart, too. About that time I looked around and saw Bill Arp standing at the door with his mouth open and a merry glister in his eye. As he came forward, he says to me: "Squire, are you gwine to print that?"

"I reckon I will, Bill" said I. "What name are ye gwine to put to it?" said he. "I don't know yet," said I; "I haven't thought about a name." Then he brightened up and said: "Well, Squire, I wish you would put mine, for them's my sentiments," and I promised him that I would.<sup>5</sup>

Since it was soon evident, because of its great popularity throughout the section, that this letter ironically expressed the sentiments of all classes throughout the South, Mr. Smith, or "Bill Arp," felt encouraged to address in that year and the next, three other letters to "Abe Linkhorn."

<sup>3</sup> "A Glimpse of Humor," *ibid.*, May 28, 1878.

<sup>4</sup> "What the Papers Say," *ibid.*, March 6, 1892.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Henry Smith, *Bill Arp's Scrap Book* (Atlanta: Jas. P. Harrison & Co., 1884), p. 8; Charles Henry Smith, *Bill Arp From the Uncivil War to Date* (Atlanta: Byrd Printing Co., 1903), pp. 58-9.

These the "Georgia prototype of Nasby"<sup>6</sup> thought "pertinent to the occasion that provoked it, and very impertinent to those it held up before the public eye."<sup>7</sup> Writing with his tongue in his cheek, playfully pretending friendliness to Lincoln and the Union, he gave the President very good suggestions as to how to avoid being defeated by the stubborn, fire-spitting rebels.<sup>8</sup> He forewarned Lincoln that the "Lee side of any shore is unhealthy to your population," that "your generals don't travel the right road to Richmond. . . . The way they have been tryin' to come is through a mighty Longstreet, over two powerful Hills, and across a mighty Stonewall. It would be safer for 'em to go around by the Rocky Mountains." To the delight of his readers he taunted Lincoln with his having had to enter Washington in disguise,<sup>9</sup> with the failure of his armies to advance, with his factories being closed "owing to a thin crop of cotton," with the failure of his emancipation proclamation to stop the buying and selling of negroes, with Lincoln's having undertaken too big a job. He paid his rebel respects to Lincoln's associates, Vice-President Hannibal Hamlin and "Bill Seward and the other members of the Kangaroo" whom, he is afraid, the government is giving a "great deal of unnecessary trouble." His humble advice is that "if things don't work better soon, you'd better grease it, or trade the darned old thing off."

Years later Bill Arp, in all seriousness, was to pay tribute to Lincoln as a "large-hearted patriot" and a real friend of the South, and to admit that Lincoln's death was a national calamity.<sup>10</sup> But in 1861 and 1862 he was concerned with presenting "echoes of our people's thoughts" and with "playing brag" to ease the minds of people who "needed relaxation from the momentous and absorbing interests of war." In 1899 Bill said, "I wrote . . . sometimes just to give our boys some comfort and our enemies some sass." In this he was eminently successful.

In his subsequent letters throughout the war period and, indeed, up to the very month of his death, he continued to echo his people's thoughts, to articulate the Southern view on all points of contention between the sections. His varied experience as member of the Georgia Militia, Commissary on the Virginia front, member of the home guard, refugee, Judge Advocate of a Confederate Habeas Corpus Court, gave him a comprehensive knowledge of war events and personalities and of the reactions of Georgians to them.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Blair, *Native American Humor* (New York: American Book Co., 1937), p. 558.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Henry Smith, *Bill Arp, So Called* (New York: Metropolitan Record Office, 1866), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> The Lincoln letters are in *Bill Arp, So Called* and in Charles Henry Smith, *Bill Arp's Peace Papers* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1873).

<sup>9</sup> *Bill Arp, So Called*, p. 19. A popular story later proved false. See Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln. The War Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), II, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, January 18, 1885; November 10, 1899.

On the much disputed question of the cause and the aim of what Bill called the Uncivil War, he spoke out boldly. He and his people believed that the war was not fought for equal rights; it was not a struggle of slave-holders to perpetuate slavery, as was still thought in the North in 1877, for the "slave-holders were generally anti-secessionists and Union men." The cause of the war was ill-feeling engendered (1) by the North's "jealousy of our power and influence in the councils of the nation; for it is a historic fact that the statesmen of the South controlled the Government for fifty years," and (2) by "our condemnation of their immoral practices in trade and the pursuit of money" which he says caused them to begin "a fanatical crusade against slavery — notwithstanding they sold us the slaves and the sin with them more than a century ago. . ."<sup>11</sup> The war was brought about specifically and directly by

tariff that discriminated against the South, the extension of slavery into the territories, the admission of Texas and Missouri, Puritan hatred of Cavaliers, the South's holding the presidency 52 out of the first 64 years. But the main cause was that a president was elected by a sectional party pledged to shut up slavery and pen it in and give it no outlet into the public territories. And here it must stay and fester and endanger our own section by its own increase until it became a stench.<sup>12</sup>

As to the connection of slavery with the war, Bill told the story thus:

Old Pewrytan went off one day with some ships, and took a few beads and Jews harps, and bought up a lot of captured niggers . . . and stole a few more on the coast of Africa, and brought 'em over and educated 'em to work in the field, and cut wood, and skeer bars, and so forth, but not includin' votin', nor musterin', nor the jury business, nor so forth.

Well, after while they found that . . . New England did not agree with the nigger, and so they begun to slide 'em down South as fast as possible. After they had sold 'em and got the money, they jined the church and became sanctified about slavery, sorter like the woman that got converted and then give all her novels away to her unconverted sister. Well, the Old Dominion and sich of her sons as Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Randolph, bought 'em and worked 'em to satisfaction; whereupon Old Pew got jealous and began to preach again it to break it down. . . . They kept peggin' away at us untell we got mad — and we resolved to cut loose from 'em and paddle our own canoo.<sup>13</sup>

## II. THE SOUTHERN CONDUCT OF THE WAR

The Southern conduct of the war received from Bill both praise and censure. The officers and soldiers bravely fighting the South's battles were always objects of pride to Bill and his people. It was a memorable occasion when he saw both Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. On the

<sup>11</sup> *Scrap Book*, p. 378.

<sup>12</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, July 12, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> *Bill Arp, So Called*, pp. 160-61.



sixth day of the Chickahominy battle, General Tige Anderson sent him to General Lee's headquarters for instructions. In Lee's tent he saw Stonewall Jackson asleep on the straw under a table. He said,

Reverently I gazed upon him for a minute, for I felt almost like I was in the presence of some divinity. What a scene for a painter was that — the two greatest generals of the army, yes, of the age, together; one asleep on the straw, worn out with fatigue and excitement, the camp tables set up above him; while the other, with his staff dined in silence over him and watched his needed rest. Both of them were patriots and Christians, and both of them were men of prayer.

Of the troops Bill said, "They carry their sand in their gizzards where . . . it is always handy." He saw them under fire and in the hospitals, and he noted that "the boys were heroes under the surgeon's knife as well as on the battlefield," adding that one soldier was "laughing and joking like a school-boy" while being operated on. The soldiers in the camps, as Bill saw them, were well disciplined and dedicated to their cause, but they were allowed their fun. Two stories of the "original Bill Arp," who was Bill Earp in real life, furnished glimpses of the lighter side of camp life for readers who knew only too well the hardships of their soldiers. At Manassas, this Bill took General Gardner, his commanding officer, "a lot of beautiful honey," which the General appreciated, but which turned out to have been filched from a farmer, who soon made a pitiful complaint to the General. The writer tells the rest of the story thus:

The General was a West Pointer and a strict constructionist, and he was proud of his regiment. So that evening at dress parade, he made 'em a nice little speech about a soldier's honor, and about this honey business, and wound up by saying that he didn't know who stole the honey and he didn't want to know, and he wasn't going to try to find out, but he wanted every man who was willing to help pay the old man for his loss to step five paces to the front.

Bill Arp was the first man to throw up his hat and holler, "Hurrah for Gen'l Gardner," and marched forward with enthusiasm. The whole regiment stepped forward and joined in cheers for their noble general, while Bill, without waiting for orders, went down the line with his hat saying, "Put in, boys, the General is right; let's pay the old man and git the gals some clothes. I golly, the gals must have clothes."

They made up about ninety dollars. . . . Bill's company knew very well that he was the ring-leader of the theft and they laughed and shouted to see his zeal in making restitution.<sup>14</sup>

The other story was of an incident that occurred at Centerville during the bitter winter of 1861-62. "The orders against contraband whisky were very strict, but still the soldiers managed somehow to keep in pretty good spirits." One day Colonel Towers noticed that Bill and some others

<sup>14</sup> *Scrap Book*, p. 16.

who were buying apples from a wagon were quite hilarious. He examined the barrels of apples and found a five-gallon keg of apple brandy concealed in six of the barrels. The General confiscated the load, sent a keg of brandy to each of the five regimental hospitals, and had the other one sent to his own tent and put under his cot.

Bill Arp did not seem pleased with the distribution, and wagged his head ominously. He was on detail to guard the General's headquarters that night; and so, when the next morning the General concluded to sample the brandy . . . he suddenly discovered that the keg was gone. Colonel Towers was there and sent for a list of the guard, and when he saw Bill Arp's name, he quietly remarked: "I understand it now." All doubts were removed, no search was made, for the General enjoyed the joke; but that night the keg was replaced under the cot with about half of its contents. Bill said he was always willin' to tote fair and divide with his friends.<sup>15</sup>

Behind the lines certain groups were not behaving well and therefore were causing much concern by hindering the war effort. Bill was caustic about those cavalymen<sup>16</sup> who had been sent home "to recruit their hosses and to rest 'em," but who were, instead, "perambulating through and through a poor bleeding country" wearing out their horses, and then swapping them for better ones when the owners were asleep or away. It would be the "devilishest undertaking of the conflict" to whip the Confederate cavalry, because they were too hard to catch! They were "ubiquitous and everlasting." "I have travelled a heap of late," he said, "and nary a hill or holler, nary vale or valley, nary mountain gorge or inaccessible ravine have I found, but what the cavalry had been there and *just left*." From such people as the home guard, protected by Governor Brown from the dangers of the front, Bill hoped the Good Lord would deliver the country in the next war. "Joe Brown's 'dubble and twisted life insurance home gard' never run from the enemy — no, sir, nary time! They never got in a hundred miles of a battle. They was too bizzy stealin' hosses at home, and prowlin' poor wimmen and children whose husbands and daddies was away off in the war." Not being occupied otherwise, "most of them have engaged in the extortion business of one sort or another." When a soldier on leave at home tried to recruit his family's supplies, his pocket book "looked like an elephant had trod on it" before he was half through. "It took three months' pay to buy a pair of shoes and a fine tooth comb. Shoeing and hatting the children was indefinitely postponed." It was too bad that these extortioners could not be put to fighting. "Governor Brown thought he would put some of 'em to the useful art of bullet-stopping, so he called for a draft. Enough of the patriotic responded, and there was no draft."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Peace Papers*, pp. 61-4.

<sup>17</sup> *Bill Arp, So Called*, pp. 31-33.

## III. THE CONFEDERACY AND THE STATE OF GEORGIA

In the four-year controversy with the Confederate Government led by Governor Joe Brown, Vice-President Stephens, and Robert Toombs over what those Georgia leaders considered the illegal assumption of state powers by the central government, Bill Arp was on the side of President Davis and his great Georgia champion, Benjamin H. Hill, the press of the state, and most patriotic Southerners. He had long disliked Alexander Stephens, and the acts of the "immortal trio" aroused his ire because he felt that they were hampering the war effort. Their fight on the Confederate conscription bill he ridiculed time and again, showing that it was foolish to contend that the conscription acts were dangerous, as Stephens put it, because of their tendency "to check the ardor of the people by appearing to slight their spontaneous patriotic service." In "A Message to All Folks" in 1864, Bill sarcastically considered for the edification of his readers "the Conscription Bill, which has so long deprived you of the right to volunteer, and like a vampire gnawed away at your burning and glowing patriotism." With fine irony he predicted that when this bill should be repealed, "all the people of Georgia (that are not in the war), both old and young, and big and little," will rush "to the front in one glorious phalanx, to offer up their lives on the altar of liberty."<sup>18</sup>

Place that parenthetical remark, "that are not in the war," alongside many allusions to Joe Brown's exemptions and the efforts of citizens to avoid war service, and Bill Arp's meaning becomes clear. He thought that Joe Brown was throwing every obstacle in the way of the Confederacy's conduct of the war. The governor believed in the draft only when he could do the drafting; he protected evaders at the cost of the war effort. In two dialogues between rascally evaders, Bill Arp revealed the attitude of patriotic Confederates toward the governor and his "pets." The time was February, 1863; Savannah was threatened and Governor Brown had been called upon for troops. The legislature had recently adjourned without supporting the fight of the "immortal trio" upon conscription, and the opposition press, according to Isaac W. Avery, was ringing "with abuse of his favoritism to his pets."<sup>19</sup> Suddenly, to the surprise of all and the chagrin of the militia, Brown ordered his "whole legion of militia officers" into service with a reduction in rank. For once Brown had the whole state with him. Avery says, "A grin, so to speak, spread over the state" at this "happy order." Bill Arp's evaders incriminated each other. One of them Bill called "Potash," after the essential war commodity which he was pretending to produce as an excuse for keeping out of combat; the other he called "Reduced." "Potash" told "Reduced," "I've

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> Isaac W. Avery, *The History of the State of Georgia From 1850 to 1881* (New York: Brown and Derby, 1881), p. 256.

done as much fighting as you and I haven't done any . . . — you ain't the first staff officer that bragged about his fighting. I once heard a fat fellow in a theatre, by the name of Fal-staff, do the same thing, and he got caught at it." "Reduced" accused "Potash" of "skulkin' behind a parcel of ash hoppers, pretendin' you are stewin' down patriotism into powder," finishing off with a pun, "Blamed if I can't smell the lie on you!" "Reduced" said he could "enjoy the thing splendidly" if he were not "one of 'em. It's good for fellows under forty, and who instead of going to fight slipped under Brown's wagon sheet." "What security has a man got for his liberty?" was his wry protest.<sup>20</sup>

Bill said a "numerous class" were dodging conscription. People grew old quite suddenly those days, developed all sorts of chronic diseases. And they became desperately concerned with carrying on necessary business: "there's the mail must be carried, the telegraph attended to, steamboats must travel, shoes must be made, potash be burnt, and all mechanics must go ahead, and then there's the numerous holes and hiding places around a depot, or hospital, or the Quartermaster's department, or the passport office. . ."<sup>21</sup>

In an open letter to his "Old Friend Joe,"<sup>22</sup> he teased the governor about influencing the legislature by allowing the members special privileges, and accused him of "trying to climb too fast," of "paving your way to the Presidency." He enclosed a set of resolutions in which he represented Brown as expressing his exalted opinion of himself in such resolutions as, "I am the State" and even "I am the Southern Confederacy."

Bill Arp discussed Joe Brown's opposition to the Confederate Government on other measures than the Conscription Act. Of the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, which Brown had fought doggedly, Bill sarcastically remarked, "It [Habeas Corpus] is, when suspended, the most savagerous beast that ever got after tories and traitors. To all honest and patriotic folks it is said to be perfectly harmless, but still . . . it might get loose and waylay our liberties." He said that he was astonished that his fellow citizens were so "quiet and unconscious" with such a boa constrictor hanging over them. He told Joe Brown that if he had waited until "the President had took somebody with the 'habeas corpus' and collapsed him in . . . secret dungeon," he would have had "more capital to work on."

Since the discovery of America by Pocahontas, the *habeas corpus* has never been suspended over anybody, except about three hundred thousand soldiers in the Confederate army. For nearly three years, Generals Lee and Johnston have had it suspended over all the fighting boys in their command. . . . I asked

<sup>20</sup> Bill Arp, *So Called*, pp. 43-47.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

some of them how they got along with the habeas corpus hanging over them and they said "I was a fool . . ."<sup>23</sup>

He climaxed his ridicule with a suggestion that "our soldiers ought to let the Yankees alone and come home and fight these savage beasts," conscription, secret sessions, the currency bill, and "old habeas corpus hung up."

Struck more intimately by the Currency Bill than by any other of the "savage beasts," Bill Arp uttered a half serious protest of his own "about the way my finances have been managed by other people." No doubt he did this for the same reason that he taunted Lincoln and ridiculed Joe Brown — the people suffering under the drastic reduction in the value of their money needed a friend to voice their feelings and make them laugh at their own confusion. He could then lead them to his own conclusion, "Then, again, I get over it, and conclude that it couldn't be helped."<sup>24</sup>

His attitude toward Stephens at this time he revealed years later when he wrote,

It's just like little Alek was during the war — at a time when the nation's life was a hangin' on the impendin' battle of the wilderness he was a settin' away back in Liberty Hall a cryin' at the top of his voice: "Hold on—stop—pause—desist—halt—stack arms everybody, and wait — wait I say till we can settle this great question of habeas corpus."<sup>25</sup>

The peace propaganda efforts of Alexander Stephens, his brother Linton, and Joseph E. Brown he satirized thus:

I am aware that Mr. Davis in his messages, and Congress in their addresses, and our generals in their official communications, have all the time entreated our enemies to let us alone, to let us have peace; and I am also aware that the Constitution *alone* shall have the right to declare war and make peace, but *nevertheless notwithstanding*, I have got a right to holler *enough!* or *peace!* *peace!* if I want to and I am going to do it.<sup>26</sup>

#### IV. REFUGEEING

The plight of the people left at home he reflected chiefly in the experiences of his own family in being forced to become refugees in the conditions they saw as they traveled about the state running "the gauntlet of Yankee raids and rebel cavalry," and in the situation they found at Rome upon their return. These he bemoans and laughs at in several letters, chiefly "The Battle of Rome," "The Roman Runatee," "My Late Travels and Adventures," and "Bill Arp's Return."

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>25</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, September 22, 1878.

<sup>26</sup> *Bill Arp, So Called*, p. 58.

The "battle"<sup>27</sup> was largely a state of alarm caused by a raiding unit of the Northern forces that was turned back just outside the town of Rome. But Bill describes the situation graphically.

Unreliable persons will be circulating so many spurious accounts of the "Grand Rounds" took by the infernal Yankees in these Rome-antic regions, that I think it highly proper you should get the strait of it from one who seen it with his eyes, and heard it with his years, and a piece of it fell on his big toe. . . . Just before the break of day on Sunday, the third of May, 1863, the citizens of the Eternal City were aroused from their slumbers with the chorus of the Marseilles hymn. "To arms, to arms, ye brave. Abe Lincoln is pegging away; the yankees are riding to Rome on a raid." Ah! then was the time to try men's soles, but there was no panic, no skedaddling, no shaking of knees; but one universal determination to *do something*. The burial squads organized first and foremost, and began to inter their money, and spoons, and four-pronged forks, and such like, in small graves about the premises. Babies were sent to the rear. Horses hid in canebrakes. Cows milked uncommonly dry. Cashiers and bank agents carried off their funds in a pair of saddlebags, which very much exposed their facilities and the small compass of their resources. It was, however, a satisfactory solution of their refusing to discount for the last three months. Scouts were sent out on every road to sniff the tainted breeze.

The troops, consisting of the yeomanry, the militia, and a squad of Confederate troops, were marched across the river and "the plank of the bridge torn up so they could not retreat. This was done, however, at their own valiant request because of the natural weakness of the flesh. They determined jointly and severally firmly by these presents to *do something*." Exaggerated reports flew about of the number of the approaching enemy, the direction from which they were coming, and their distance from Rome. "Dashing Comanche couriers rode unruly steeds to and fro like a fiddler's elbow." "A man could hear anything by going about, and more too."

But about ten o'clock the head of the raid arrived at the "suburban villa of Mr. Myers" where they learned that

we had six hundred head of artillery, and six thousand cotton bags, and a promiscuous number of infantry tactics, and we were only waiting to see the whites of their eyes. Also, that the history of General Jackson at New Orleans was read in public, and that everybody was inspired to *do something*; whereupon the head of the raid turned pale and sent forward a picket. . . . After right smart skirmishing, the head of the raid fell back down the road to Alabama, and were pursued by our mountain yeomanry at a respectable distance.

The dreaded occupation of Rome and the consequent refugeeing of its inhabitants actually took place almost exactly one year later. As Bill writes about it on May 22, 1864, he is very sad:

<sup>27</sup> *Scrap Book*, pp. 26 ff.



"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow," as somebody said, I am seeking a log in some vast wilderness, a lonely roost in some Okefenokee swamp, where the foul invaders cannot travel nor their pontoon bridges float. If Mr. Shakespeare were correct when he wrote that "sweet are the juices of adversity," then me and my folks, and many others, must have some sweetening to spare. When a man is aroused in the dead of night, and smells the approach of the foul invader; . . . when he looks, perhaps the last time, upon his lovely home where he has been for many delightful years raising children and chickens, strawberries and peas, lye soap and onions, and all such luxuries of this sub-lunary life; . . . when from such influence he begins a dignified retreat, but soon is constrained to leave the dignity behind him and get away without regard to the order of his going — if there is any sweet juice in the like of it, I haven't been able to see it.<sup>28</sup>

Bill says that the Yankees "made a valiant assault upon the city of the hills" but for three days and nights they were beaten back. Then came a three-day period of rejoicing when all felt that Rome would be saved, though the big battle was yet to come. Suddenly, however, the "Military evacuation of our city was peremptorily ordered." General Johnston was retreating and the Yankees were coming in. Now there was turmoil in earnest.

With hot and feverish haste we started out in search of transportation, but nary a transport could be had. Time-honored friendship, past favors shown, everlasting gratitude, numerous small and lovely children, Confederate currency, new issue, bank bills, black bottles, and all influences were urged and used to secure a corner in a car, but nary corner. . . . With reluctant and hasty steps we prepared to make good our exit by that overland line which railroads do not control, nor A.Q.M.'s impress.<sup>29</sup>

Actually they went in what was called a "rockaway," and they must have found other vehicles for the large family group that included seven children and four slaves. The ever-faithful slave Tip, who had seen service with his master in the Confederate army, proved invaluable as a food scout, as he and the nurse Frances did in many another capacity before the refugeeing was over, but Mary and Anderson deserted in Atlanta.

Since, as they arrived in Atlanta, enemy shells were beginning to fall "as thick as Governor Brown's proclamations,"<sup>30</sup> they proceeded to Alabama, presumably to join Smith's father. There they rested for several days until Wilson's Raiders frightened them into seeking a safer refuge at the Hutchins plantation near Lawrenceville, Georgia, the home of Mrs. Smith's father. The trip from Alabama by way of Columbus (Georgia), Covington, and Madison, was a perilous one. The roads were clogged with refugees, transportation was extremely difficult, the large family had

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

to depend upon friends and relatives for lodging, and though they were travelling outside the main line of the enemy's march, they were in constant fear of raiders. At Covington they were overtaken by Stoneman's Raiders and hid out there until a Madison friend sent a carriage and wagon for them and had them conducted safely to his house. There again Stoneman's Raiders came looking for horses and mules, which the men of the family fortunately managed to conceal in a canebrake until the raiders went away.

They finally reached Lawrenceville safely, and the family stayed there on the Hutchins plantation while Smith spent some months in Macon. He was sent there by President Jefferson Davis as a special commissioner with Judge Eugenius Nesbit to hold Confederate court for trying persons accused of treason. His title was Judge Advocate. When the court was broken up by Stoneman's Raiders, he joined his family, and, with the help of a mule team and a wagon furnished by Mr. Hutchins, they returned home.

#### V. THE "PEACE"

The situation they found at Rome was disheartening. Their home had been used by Federal officers, General Vandiver, General Jefferson C. Davis, and possibly General William T. Sherman. All of its furnishings, with the exception of a huge bookcase and a wardrobe that were too heavy to move, had been taken away by soldiers and by marauders who came in after the soldiers had left. But Bill says:

The doors creaked welcome . . . , the hoppin-bug chirruped on the hearth, and the whistling wind was singing the same old tune around the bedroom corner. We were about as happy as we had been miserable, and when I remarked that General Vandiver must be a gentleman for not burning it, Mrs. Arp replied—

"I wonder what he done with my sewing machine."

"He didn't burn down our shade trees," said I.

"My bureaus and carpets and crockery are all gone," said she.

"It may be possible," said I, "that the General—"

"And my barrel of soap," said she.

"It may be possible," said I, "that the General moved off our things to take care of them for us. I reckon we'll get 'em all back after awhile."

"After while," said Mrs. Arp like an echo, and ever since then when I allude to our Northern brethren, she only replies, "After while."<sup>31</sup>

Fully as sad as his picture of war was that of the disappointments and the sufferings through reconstruction, "this abominabul peace . . . this rubbin' the skab off before the sore gets well." He said in 1873,

They've sorter let us slip back into the Union, but they've put taskmasters over us, and sent carpetbaggers down to plunder us. They won't let us throw

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

flowers on the graves of our poor boys who fell on their side of the fence. They won't give our invalid soljiers, or our widders and orfins any pensions. They taxed our cotton fifty millions of dollars and their courts said it was illegal, but they won't pay it back. . . . Now it stands to reeson that if this big family hav' got to liv' together, they can't liv' in harmony while the strong men keep imposin' on the weak ones. It stands to reeson that a guverment ort to sekure the love of all her subjects.<sup>32</sup>

To his fellow-sufferers he wrote:

"Let us have peace." When our great konkerer sed that, you thought he was referrin' to you, and to me, and to everybody. You thought he was going to fix things so that everybody could eat out of the same big feed trough. But now you see the goak of it. He was alludin' to himself.<sup>33</sup>

On September 1, 1865, he wrote his much-quoted letter to Artemus Ward<sup>34</sup> in protest against the harsh criticism of the South by the Northern editors and the humiliating conditions imposed upon the South by the reconstruction program. He said:

I am doin' my durndest to harmonize, and I think I could sukseed if it wasn't for sum things. When I see a blakgard agoin' roun' the streets with a gun on his shoulder, why rite then, for a few minits I hate the whole Yanky nashun. . . . The institution which were handed down to us by the hevinly kingdom of Massachusetts, now put over us with powder and ball.

He felt that when the South had fought a "bully fight" for a little fellow and finally "caved in and hollered enuf," the big fellow should have taken him by the hand, and helped him up and brushed "the dirt offen his close"; instead, he "kiked him attter he was down and throwd mud on him, and drug him about and rubbed sand in his eyes, and now he's agwine about huntin' up his poor little property." "I tell you, my friend," he said, "we are the poorest peepul on the face of the yearth — but we are poor and proud." He considered that the South had done only what our Revolutionary forefathers did; and he asked, if they had not succeeded, would they have been traitors, too? He warned Artemus that "If we ain't allowed to xpress our sentiments, we can take it out in *hatin'*, and *hatin'* runs hevy in my family shore. I hated a man onst so bad that all the har cum off my hed and the man drowned himself in a hog waller that nite."

It was said by one journal that this letter "was the first chirp of any bird after the surrender, and gave relief and hope to thousands of drooping hearts."<sup>35</sup> Another said in 1892:

<sup>32</sup> *Peace Papers*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109-115.

<sup>35</sup> *Louisville Courier-Journal*, quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, August 30, 1886.

None of us will ever forget the exquisite relish with which we read his quaint letter to "Artemus Ward, Showman" in the fall of 1865. It voiced Southern sentiment so fully and withal so humorously, that, for a while at least, we forgot our grievances in the delight that somebody had the courage to say what we all felt and the ability to say it so wittily and so well.<sup>36</sup>

Bill Arp's letter to Artemus Ward is the last of the war papers; though, of course, he commented on the war frequently in his letters up to the time of his death. The war papers had been written sporadically throughout the war years. What journal published his first letter has not been discovered, but it was probably the *Richmond* (Virginia) *Whig* or one of the Rome papers. The *Whig* published the second of the Lincoln letters January 15, 1862. In this year his letters were also being published in the *Southern Confederacy*, one of whose editors was Henry Watterson. In 1863, he was on the staff of this daily paper, which was published in Atlanta with the avowed purpose of "heaping fire and brimstone on the Yankees." One letter came out in *The Bugle Horn of Liberty*, a Griffin, Georgia, paper edited by a Union man, who published other articles that caused him to be run out of town after the third issue of the paper. Other papers that carried the war letters were the *Rome Courier*, the *Atlanta Confederacy*, the *Atlanta Intelligencer*, the *Atlanta Register*, the *Nashville* (Tennessee) *Republican*, and the *New York Metropolitan Record*.

The first collection of Bill Arp papers was made by the Metropolitan Record Press in 1866 and published under the title *Bill Arp So Called. A Side Show of the Southern Side of the War*. In 1873 another New York publisher, G. W. Carleton and Company, published his *Bill Arp's Peace Papers*. This book contained most of the letters already published and several new ones written since 1866, all of them dealing with war and the "peace."

#### VI. THE HUMOR OF BILL ARP

As a humorist, Bill Arp wrote in the tradition already established by newspaper funny men, especially Seba Smith, Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, Augustus B. Longstreet, and William Tappan Thompson. Their use of the letter form and their choice of political and family affairs as subjects suggested his own method and materials. Like theirs, his style was colloquial, aphoristic. Like James Russell Lowell and David Locke, he was made a humorist by the conflict between the North and the South; like them he felt compelled to express his indignation at actions of the other side and judged that the best way of doing so was through humor aided by the use of the vernacular. He resembled Lowell in changing his attitude toward using bad spelling for humorous effect. Though both relied heavily upon it in their early writing, especially for punning, as

<sup>36</sup> Gainesville (Georgia) *Eagle*, quoted by the *Atlanta Constitution*, March 6, 1892.

in Arp's spelling the war President's name Linkhorn, they largely abandoned it in later humorous writing.

But the spirit of Bill Arp's war and "peace" letters resembles much more closely Artemus Ward's than it does Locke's or Lowell's. It is not strange that Bill Arp selected Artemus Ward as the Northerner to whom he could speak out his mind after the war. They were kindred spirits. Their New England ancestry<sup>37</sup> had strengthened their moral tone, made them reformers at heart. Furthermore, the criticism of both writers, though at times shaped by strong indignation, was more often tempered, even sweetened, by natural kindness. Bill Arp maintained, as neither Locke nor Lowell did, a remarkable restraint in his satire of the enemies of his section. His work lacks the malice, irreverence, and extreme coarseness of Locke and the harshness of Lowell. His spirit, though continually and obviously rasped by Northern action and criticism, held little bitterness and would not allow him to lend himself to vituperation. There was no desire on his part to create a man of straw like the "Petroleum Nasby" of Locke or Lowell's "Birdofredum" as a target for malicious attacks. Declaring that he "didn't have but one politics and that was defending the South against the North," he called by name the Northern agitators against the South and the Southern betrayers of their section and openly took them to task for their sins. His fists were hard and he had an uncanny way of aiming them straight, but he disdained to hit below the belt.

Bill Arp, the writer, is never, except in his loyalty, basically like the real Bill Earp, whose name he assumed; he simply borrows the mannerisms of Bill Earp's class. In the Lincoln letters, where he first appears, he is an entirely fictional character with keen native wit, writing in the style Smith supposes a "cracker" would write, could he write at all. He is what neither Smith nor Earp could possibly have been, a Yankee sympathizer, so stupid as to give Lincoln such outrageous advice that, had Lincoln followed it, he would have quickly defeated himself. He is, as Walter Blair shows, a rascal, a fool, an ignoramus, whose mistakes are used to excellent purpose by his creator.<sup>38</sup> His mistakes in spelling and in judgment produce a result opposite to his intention. He has a genius for saying the thing that will hurt where it was intended to help, for unintentionally irritating his great friend, as in his reference to the inactivity of Vice-President Hamlin or to the Yankees' hasty retreat from Bull Run to Washington in July, 1861.

In the fifth letter of his first book, it is clear that a change has come over Bill. Here he is writing about the extortioners in his own section;

<sup>37</sup> Smith's father was Asahel Reed Smith, who had come to Georgia from Vermont; his mother was Carolyn Maguire from Charleston, South Carolina.

<sup>38</sup> Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 558.

there is no Yankee sympathizing in this letter, and in the following one Northerners are bluntly called "the infernal Yankees." Bill's style becomes increasingly more polished, though he never gives up entirely what he called "the idealized cracker style"; and his experiences and ideas are more and more identifiable with those of the author. As Mr. Blair has said, when Bill wrote his letter to Artemus Ward, which appears as the twentieth letter of the first volume and is dated September, 1865, he is no longer a cracker Southerner sympathetic with the North but a middle class Georgian openly loyal to the people of his own section.

What principally gives Bill Arp his individuality among Georgia humorists is the fact that he combined their several purposes — humorous, historical, and moral — with other purposes natural to a man of his fiery partisanship, his intense love of the Old South and its way of life, and his sense of obligation as a thoughtful and privileged citizen to those less well informed. His humor is generally original, artless, natural. A study of contemporary criticism of the letters proves that the people for whom he wrote judged it well. They said it was "quizzical," "quaint," "droll." It was "unpretending humor"; "old-fashioned, homely talk"; "rough and tumble" but also often "dry and quiet"; "local, current, partisan"; "sarcastic" but "genial, not unkind"; "never irreverent or immoral."

The timeliness of his early work gave Smith some concern when he thought of his chance of permanence as a writer. He wrote in answer to the request of the *New York Metropolitan Record* for copies of his letters for publication:

I have thought that they were hardly worthy of being placed before the public in book form. At the time that they were written they were appreciated because the minds of the public needed relaxation from the momentous and absorbing interests of the war. . . . The humor that is in them was entertaining then, for it was pertinent to the occasion and very impertinent to those it held up before the public eye.

I do not think that such humor will bear the wasting severity of time. It was once considered sparkling and exhilarating, but like good wine it has become stale from being too long uncorked. . . . At the time they appeared in the press of the South, these sentiments were the silent echoes of our people's thoughts, and this accounts, in the main, for the popularity with which they were received.<sup>20</sup>

This self-criticism came before the writing of his home and farm letters, which he thought had a better chance of survival. But these early letters can still produce a frequent chuckle, and his use in them of many vivid details makes his reflection of the war and reconstruction years valuable

<sup>20</sup> Bill Arp, *So Called*, pp. 5-7.



source material for the historian. Therefore perhaps Charles Henry Smith was wrong in his prophecy that they might not "bear the wasting severity of time." At any rate, a discerning critic, Miss Jennette Tandy, writing sixty years after he made that remark, declared:

He is a keen sighted observer of human affairs, an essayist, and a moralist. These attributes, added to his gifts for characterization and his important position as spokesman of Southern opinion will in time win for him recognition as one of our notable philosopher-humorists.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Tandy, Jennette, *Crackerbox Philosophers in American Humor and Satire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), p. 118.



## Epigram

The Donelson prisoners, exchanges inform us,  
    (This is one of the items that is not suppressed,)  
Can't or won't eat the bread that they make in Chicago,  
    For the Flower of the South hates the flour of the West!  
Pray, what would they have, these poor, ragged rebels?  
    What grub is the best for secesh of their station!  
Give 'em rations they're used to — on corn be they fed,  
    For don't they belong to a Cornfederation?

—*Vanity Fair.*

## Practicing Preacher

A Methodist minister has invented a double-chambered shell, the inner containing powder, and the outer a composition intensely inflammatory and explosive, which, when the shell bursts, consumes everything it falls upon. It is said to be a very destructive engine, and the clerical inventor is reported to have remarked, while explaining his invention at the department at Washington: "Faith, sir, I preached hell-fire and brimstone in the abstract a long time, and now I'll give 'em a little of it in the concrete form." The name of the pugnacious minister is Puffer — but, as Shakespeare says: "What's in a name?"

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Civil War Humor:

## Orpheus C. Kerr

ELLEN BREMNER

### I

HOSEA BIGELOW, BILL ARP, ARTEMUS WARD, and Petroleum V. Nasby are, according to present-day rankings, the most effective of the satiric commentators on the Civil War. Probably the people of the 1860's would have added another name to this list: Orpheus C. Kerr. This pun upon "office-seeker" was the pseudonym of Robert Henry Newell (1836-1901), whose contributions began as correspondence from Washington to the New York *Sunday Mercury* and continued to other publications until 1868.<sup>1</sup> The *Orpheus C. Kerr Papers* were published in book form in several series: 1862, 1863, 1865, and, under the new title *Smoked Glass*, in 1868. In 1871, the letters were collected in a single volume.<sup>2</sup>

Such a printing history is in itself evidence of Newell's popularity; further evidence comes from the publisher's advertisement for the *Orpheus C. Kerr Papers* facing the title page of Newell's novel, *Avery Glibun*, published in 1867:

To say these criticisms of Orpheus C. Kerr are universally known, admired, and laughed at, would be superfluous. Their inimitable wit and sarcasm have made their author famous, and since his letters have been published in book form their circulation has been enormous.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Leacock, "Robert Henry Newell" in Allen Johnson, (Editor) *Dictionary of American Biography*, 21 volumes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-37), XVII, pp. 458-59.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Henry Newell, *The Orpheus C. Kerr Papers* (New York: Blakeman and Mason, 1862); Robert Henry Newell, *The Orpheus C. Kerr Papers: Second Series* (New York: Carleton, 1863); Robert Henry Newell, *The Orpheus C. Kerr Papers: Third Series* (New York: Carleton, 1865); Robert Henry Newell, *Smoked Glass* (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1868) and Robert Henry Newell, *The Orpheus C. Kerr Papers* (New York: G. W. Carleton and Co., 1871).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Henry Newell, *Avery Glibun; or, Between Two Fires* (New York: G. W. Carleton and Co., 1867).

According to another advertisement, the "world-renowned" *Papers* had an American sale of more than fifty thousand, and were printed in four English editions.<sup>4</sup> This reputation survived, at least as a memory, as late as 1897, when Robert Ford, including Orpheus C. Kerr in an anthology of American humor, remarked on the letters' popularity:

... to say they were relished as they appeared is a mean way of stating their effect; they were actually devoured with avidity, and the delight they afforded *then* is not forgotten even *now*.<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, the New York *Sunday Post*, in an article occasioned by Newell's death in 1901, commented on "the tremendous popularity of his *Orpheus C. Kerr Papers* during the war".<sup>6</sup>

Nor was this reputation exclusively a popular one. Newell's publisher embellished an 1868 advertisement with a sampling of critical comment. The New York *Independent* ranked Orpheus C. Kerr "at the head of American humorists." According to *Wilkes' Spirit*, the public reception of the *Orpheus C. Kerr Papers* was similar to the first reaction to Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*. The London *Star* classified Newell with Lowell, Holmes, and Artemus Ward as the "very great" American humorists.<sup>7</sup>

## II

Robert Henry Newell's failure to retain the high rank which his contemporaries gave him so freely is puzzling. Perhaps his place in the tradition of American humor has been obscured because his political satire, compared with Lowell's, Nasby's, or Sut Lovengood's, is dispassionate and non-partisan, and its tone is therefore far less bitter and violent. A London reviewer of the 1860's comments with pleased surprise on the impartiality and good nature of Orpheus C. Kerr's political humor.<sup>8</sup> While a difference in kind between Newell and other Civil War humorists is clear, the relation of this difference to his failure to survive is hard to make. Their very partisan violence excuses the excesses of Nasby and Bigelow once the occasions which provoked their anger have passed, and no longer involve the reader's own partisan sympathies. Newell, whose target is universal human nature in its wartime manifestations, perhaps retains more satiric sting for a modern reader than his more bitter contemporaries. The partisans insinuate the virtues of their side, however

<sup>4</sup> The verso of an unpaginated leaf placed before the publisher's catalog bound at the end of *Smoked Glass*.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Ford, *American Humorists, Recent and Living* (London: Alexander Gardner, 1897).

<sup>6</sup> New York *Sunday Post*, July 14, 1901.

<sup>7</sup> The verso of an unpaginated leaf placed before the publisher's catalog bound at the end of *Smoked Glass*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

much they blacken the other, but Newell's mockery spares nothing; he derides the entire spectacle of America at war. His basic satiric impulse is a deep-rooted anti-militarism.

In the introduction to the collected edition of the *Orpheus C. Kerr Papers*, Newell explains his philosophy and his comic technique:

Much of general mankind's lamentable alertness for war is, and always has been attributable in a great degree to the dazzling glare, heroic glow, and miraculous splendor of achievement romantically associated with march and battle, in the common mind. One nation under bellicose excitement is much like another, all the world over; one war is much like another, whatever the cause; and the Mackerel Brigade of the present history may possibly serve as a piece of smoked glass to the mind's eye willing to discern the plain, often ludicrously incongruous, realities of all that dazzling glare of steel and gold, heroic glow of patriotic ferocity, and miraculous splendor of strategical and personal achievement, which, through traditional imagination, have so long made all peoples the ready military sacrifices of some people.<sup>9</sup>

Newell borrows the notion of viewing events through smoked glass from astronomical observations of the sun. It is his metaphor for his basic satiric device of intense reduction, a device which renders the events of the war so trivial that they cannot be recognized by the reader until they are re-inflated with a false rhetoric:

... the flaws in patriotism, statesmanship, and general public pretension, which most seriously menace the stability of a nation, must, after their detection through smoked glass, be exaggerated to the capacity of popular vision in order that they may find adequate reprehension in the popular understanding.<sup>10</sup>

As the Civil War became more and more romanticized in the 70's and 80's, the relentless anti-heroism of Newell's humor may have begun to lose a public. Later and serious critics, however, have rejected Newell chiefly because his character, Orpheus C. Kerr, has no clear relation to American life.

In 1901, W. P. Trent, writing "A Retrospect of American Humor" for the *Century Magazine*, found that Seba Smith's Jack Downing, Bill Arp,<sup>11</sup> and Petroleum V. Nasby<sup>12</sup> were the masters of American political satire. Orpheus C. Kerr, while a clever parodist, and a bright and apt commentator on events, seemed to him comparatively forced. Arp was "nearer ... to the soil" than Kerr; Newell's merits are predominately "literary."<sup>13</sup>

Like Trent, Jennette Tandy, writing in 1925, compares Bill Arp with

<sup>9</sup> Newell's introduction to the collected papers, 1871, p. xv.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> W. P. Trent, "A Retrospect of American Humor," *Century Magazine*, LXIII (November, 1901), p. 55.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Orpheus C. Kerr to the latter's disadvantage.<sup>14</sup> For both critics Arp's superiority comes from his more graphic presentation of an American type and of a section of American life.

Newell's failure to retain the high rank which his contemporaries gave him seems at least to some degree to be the consequence of his assumed character's indefinite outlines. Jack Downing, Hosea Bigelow, Bill Arp, Artemus Ward, and Petroleum V. Nasby — the last three during the Civil War period if not later — are fairly consistent characters, connected with some definite American region, with families and antecedents, with clearly defined political attitudes consistent with their environments. Orpheus C. Kerr is comparatively rootless. He gives some account of his boyhood and youth in New England, but his adult character and his mode of life in Washington are irrelevant to this background. His politics are independent; the Copperhead Democrats and the New England Abolitionists are equally ludicrous to him. Every burlesque Democrat peace plan in the letters can be balanced by an absurd New England scheme to educate the liberated negro. Newell does pay significant tribute to Lincoln in one notable passage:

The more I see of our Honest Abe, my boy, — the more closely I analyze the occasional acts by which he individualizes himself as a unit distinct from the decimals of his cabinet, — the deeper grows my faith in his sterling wisdom.<sup>15</sup>

But he prefers to caricature his frontier mannerisms and his delight in anecdotes in most of his references to the President.

The indefinite personality of Orpheus C. Kerr has, however, other sources beyond his political independence. As Newell explained in his preface, the parody of the high-flown patriotic journalism which creates false ideas of military glory is essential to his satiric technique. The impulse behind the character, Orpheus C. Kerr, is thus, as Trent implied, almost entirely literary. He is only a medium who allows Newell to employ the oily, insincere, "office-seeker's" rhetoric in which the letters are written. He has no identity beyond what can be inferred from the tone of his language. His personality is further disintegrated by Newell's constant intrusion into this language, puncturing the pompous diction with a well-timed anti-climax or an absurdly over-extended metaphor:

It seems scarcely five minutes ago that this vast and otherwise large country sprang from chaos at the call of Columbus, and immediately commenced to produce wooden nutmegs for a foreign shore.<sup>16</sup>

Along the front, "Forward!" was the word, and the Conic Section swept to the assault, like a sea of bayonets dashed against a shore of adamant rock from the hollow of an Almighty hand.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Jennette Tandy, *Crackerbox Philosophers in American Humor and Satire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925).

<sup>15</sup> *Third Series*, 1865, pp. 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> *First Series*, 1862, p. 101.

<sup>17</sup> *Third Series*, 1865, p. 63.



Some of the blunders which give the language its comic effect could be unconscious, and thus allow Orpheus C. Kerr a certain consistency; but far more often they are obviously deliberate. In passage after passage, the language may be roughly appropriate to Orpheus; but the mind which controls it is clearly Newell's.

Orpheus' reality is further dissipated by the fact that his occupation and activities are very vaguely defined. He has some relation to the Army, but nothing that necessitates his staying long in one spot. He lounges about Willard's bar in Washington, taking Richmond "with a bit of sugar," or rides off on his Gothic steed Pegasus to view the theatre of war, according to Newell's convenience. His ramblings are a thread on which his creator can string comments on the unrelated events of the week, relieved by simple comedy of a very different degree of satirical intention. One typical letter begins with remarks on the President's message, moves on to a comic episode between Orpheus' valet and a Missourian who mistakes Pegasus, the horse, for a hayrick, pauses while Orpheus exchanges wisecracks with the General of the Army about the length of the war, and finally arrives at Accomac, where the army is encamped, to find the Mackerel Brigade "reconnoitering in force after a pullet they had seen the night before."<sup>18</sup>

The structure of any single Orpheus C. Kerr letter is thus quite fragmentary, unified only by Orpheus' rather nebulous personality. One cannot find in Newell single units which maintain a consistent comic attitude towards some one subject matter. Nor can one infer from the whole series of letters a clear notion of the character of their ostensible writer and his relation to the events which he narrates. Failure on such basic artistic grounds would seem to account for the rapidity with which Newell lost his comic appeal once his narrative had lost its topical appeal.

### III

Nevertheless, there is ground for a protest that Newell's assignment to oblivion is unjust. There emerges from the rambling topical narrative of the letters a chronicle of the campaigns of the Army of the Potomac "viewed through smoked glass" which is still immensely comic, and whose technique of absolute reduction can still shock.

Most of the campaigns of the war are reduced to the effort to cross Duck Lake, a puddle which will float a rowboat after a rain, and to capture Paris, "a city of two houses previous to the recent great fire, which destroyed half of it, . . . fortified with a strong picket fence and counterscarp earthworks. . . ."<sup>19</sup>

The Army becomes simply the Mackerel Brigade, supported by the

<sup>18</sup> *First Series*, 1862, pp. 144-45.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Orange County Howitzers and the Anatomical Cavalry. In the first year of the war the Brigade is whisky-soaked and irresponsible, "so well up in animal spirits that each chap was equal to a pony of brandy, and capable of capturing any amount of glass artillery."<sup>20</sup> As the war prolongs itself, however, the Brigade receives the pity accorded suffering old age. Spectacles are issued so that the poor chaps can see the point of constantly butting up against the Blue Ridge, and blue cotton umbrellas to protect their aged joints from rheumatism.

Viewed through smoked glass, the generals of the Mackerel Brigade suffer a horrible loss of dignity. One memorable discussion, among the officers, of McClellan's character and strategy concludes:

. . . you will understand that our leading military men have perfect faith in the genius of McClellan, and believe that he is equal to fifty yards of the Star Spangled Banner. His great Anaconda has gathered itself in a circle around the doomed rabbit of the rebellion, and if the rabbit swells he's a goner.<sup>21</sup>

When Burnside replaces McClellan in the command, Newell produces a new General of the Mackerel Brigade whose dress and horsemanship are so dazzling that they distract the troops from necessary military business. Finally Burnside wanders, apparently by mistake, onto a battlefield. All firing stops; a low murmur of wonder sweeps the ranks. Even the Confederate soldier who defends the roof of Paris with a horse pistol is paralyzed by the spectacle of so much Shape. "The battle was over for that day."<sup>22</sup> If Burnside is distinguished for Shape, Hooker has Ability. "Spurning all that vain pomp which too often makes our generals as clean in appearance as the military minions of the despotic powers of Europe, he makes it a practice to attire himself like the unostentatious dustman of a true Republic. . ."<sup>23</sup> This "Grim Old Fighting Cox" manifests his Ability by firing pistols indiscriminately into the air to punctuate his commands, and by kicking the hapless infantry. After Gettysburg, Newell's letters are much less regular, so that the portraits of Meade and Grant are incomplete. At the final battle for Richmond, a Miss P. Hen arrives from New England to encourage the troops to the assault with her umbrella, and pauses to rebuke Grant for his nasty dirty tobacco-chewing, a correction which he accepts humbly.

When the Mackerel Brigade meets the Southern Confederacy in battle, shells and bullets lacerate the atmosphere, being directed everywhere but at the enemy. Those missiles which take effect are beans or potatoes or shoehorns. The account of a battle at the close of the Peninsular campaign is worth giving in full:

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>22</sup> *Third Series*, 1865, pp. 55-6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

The Orange County Howitzers now advanced to the front, and poured a terrible fire in the direction of a point about half way between the nearest steeple and the meridian, working horrible carnage in a flock of pigeons that happened to be passing at the time. . . .

Meanwhile, Company 3, Regiment 5, had advanced from the right, and were just about to make a splendid bayonet charge, by the oblique, over the picket-fence and earthwork, when the concealed Confederacy suddenly opened a deadly fire of old shoes, throwing the Mackerels into great confusion.

Almost simultaneously, a large potato struck the fleet on Duck Lake on the nose, so intensely exciting him that he incontinently touched off his swivel, to the great detriment of the surrounding country.

This was a critical moment, my boy; the least trifle on either side would have turned the scale, and given the victory to either party. Villiam Brown had just assumed the attitude in which he desired Frank Leslie's Illustrated Artist to draw him, when a familiar domestic utensil came hissing through the lurid air from the rebel works, and exploded in two pieces at his feet.

"Hal" says Villiam, eyeing the fragments with great pallor, "they have commenced to throw shell."

In another moment that incomparable officer was at the head of a storming party; and as the fleet opened fire on the cabbage-patch in the rear of the enemy's position, an impetuous charge was precipitated in front.

Though met by a perfect hail of turnips, stove-covers, and kindling-wood, the Mackerels went over the fence like a fourth-proof avalanche, and hemmed in the rebel garrison with walls of bayonets.

"Surrender to the Union Anaconda and the United States of America," thundered Villiam.

"You're a nasty, dirty creetur," responded the garrison, who was an old lady of venerable aspect.

"Surrender, or you're a dead man, my F. F. Venus," says Villiam, majestically.

The old lady replied with a look of scorn, my boy, walked deliberately toward the road, and when last seen was proceeding in the direction of Richmond under a green silk umbrella and a heavy press of snuff.<sup>24</sup>

Newell's best battles, like this one, proceed entirely from inside his own head, but often the Mackerel strategy is dimly related to actual events. A Mackerel assault on "mountain breastworks" seems to be the charge of Marye's Heights at Fredricksburg.<sup>25</sup> The "Grim Old Fighting Cox" has an elaborate campaign which requires a three-part division of his army to surround the Confederate troops with a triangle of men. On successive assaults, the Confederacies "retreat" within the triangle so that they displace the Union troops from their positions on the other side. At the end of the third day's fighting, the "surrounded" Confederacies hold the complete triangle. This seems to be Chancellorsville viewed through smoked glass.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *First Series*, 1862, pp. 310-12.

<sup>25</sup> *Third Series*, 1865, pp. 63-4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-42.

Commodore Head and his ironclad, patrolling Duck Lake, represent the Navy in this war. The ironclad is a converted stove, and in violent action is likely to lose its front grate. The Commodore spends his time fishing with his back to the southern shore, so that the unseemly Confederacies easily surprise him by constructing forts and rival ironclads within ten feet of him. He is assisted in his maneuvers by the Mackerel crew, who in moments of crisis is usually discovered eating clams in the bottom of the boat. The Commodore constantly experiments with new weapons; his most interesting invention is a swivel gun which fires through the touch-hole. Duck Lake is also the scene of several memorable struggles with pontoon bridges; one of these is disabled at the crisis of the battle by a Confederate with a scissors.

The Southern Confederacy itself has a rather unstable identity in these battles. It is very often a single individual, usually, as in the battle above, an aged maiden lady. Southern officers are represented by a Captain Munchausen, a drunken theatrical coward who flourishes the trappings of chivalry. The Captain and the southern troops grow more and more ragged as the war advances. Newell has a way of introducing the details of their poverty into an action without commenting upon it. A conversation on the effects of the Emancipation Proclamation in the South which Orpheus overhears among some Southern pickets is embellished by details like taking "a bite from a cold potatoe which he held in his hand," tightening "the string which held his inexpressibles in place," and "buttoning his coat with a bit of corn-cob." The Southerners remain nobly impervious to their suffering.<sup>27</sup>

These are the high points of Newell's smoked glass chronicle of the war. His comments on political and diplomatic events are just as reductive, but are entirely anecdotal, lacking the dramatic coherence which the war action gives to the military episodes. He copiously illustrates the stupidity of war contractors, inventors, the British government, Secretary Welles, the "reliable morning journals," stump orators, educators of the negro, and the Democratic party. Kerr also devotes a surprising amount of space to topics remote from the war, especially to the women of America and to the parody of romantic fiction. He is the deadly enemy of the sentimental "ministering angel" view of women.

Robert Henry Newell remains one of the most effective satirists of militarism and of false patriotism that American humor has produced. His artistic limitations deprive his humor of sustained interest; he is effective only in flashes. Even at his best, his satiric treatment of war is probably too simple to deserve a supremely high rank. If he satirized

<sup>27</sup> *Second Series*, 1863, pp. 303-09.

the kind of military fervor which is appropriate to small boys, he used what is essentially a small boy's kind of ridicule. It takes no account of the fact that men are suffering and dying on the battlefields which it caricatures, and that such suffering retains seriousness and importance no matter how ludicrous its occasion. He is incapable of the kind of satiric maturity which is in some of Mauldin's cartoons. But within his own limitations he writes a humor which is far more successful, and more serious in its basic impulse, than his reputation would lead a reader to expect.



## The British Lion and the Secession Ass

### A SHORT FABLE.

A lion was sitting upon his high throne,  
The mantled monarch of forest and glen;  
And the gleam of his diadem brightly shone,  
And the roar of his might reëchoed again.

A donkey at distance, harked to the roar,  
And erecting his ears from habitual flop;  
With ravishment spurred, full madly he tore  
To the foot of the throne, an obeisance to drop.

"Oh! Graciously deign a poor ass to permit  
The tip of thy paw with his mouth to salute;  
But if honor so high may not seem to be fit,  
Oh! grant him at least a kiss of thy foot."

A comical smile benignantly strayed,  
As from under the purple, right royally woven,  
To osculate freely the foot was displayed,  
By Manassas! ye asses, *the foot it was cloven!*

*Baltimore American*



## For Collectors Only

EDITED BY RALPH G. NEWMAN

18 East Chestnut Street

Chicago 11, Illinois

JOHN PAGE NICHOLSON WAS ONE OF THAT SELECT GROUP OF MEN living during the Lincoln-Civil War era, who not only had the opportunity, but the good judgment to collect books, pamphlets and manuscripts relating to the period. A member of a family with widely divergent interests, Nicholson early absorbed an interest in fine books and collecting as well as a knowledge of military matters. His paternal grandfather, John Nicholson, a native of Scotland, was a gunsmith who came to Philadelphia in 1755. During the Revolutionary War he manufactured firearms for the Continental Army. He is supposed to have designed the firelock or musket which the Committee of Safety adopted for the use of our soldiers during the war with Great Britain. Gunsmith Nicholson's son, James Bartram Nicholson, father of John Page Nicholson, was a bookbinder, a partner in the distinguished firm of Pawson & Nicholson. The other member of the firm, James Pawson was an English binder. Nicholson was a fine craftsman, who in 1856 published *A Manual of the Art of Bookbinding*, founded on John Hannett's *Bibliopegia*. Nicholson's *Manual* was the first practical work on the subject of bookbinding by an American and a much more thorough study than the Hannett book.

John Page Nicholson was born on the 66th anniversary of our Nation's Independence, July 4, 1842. He enlisted in the 28th Pennsylvania Infantry on July 23, 1861, and rose from regimental commissary sergeant to brevet lieutenant-colonel. He served with distinction with the armies of Western Virginia, Virginia, the Potomac, the Cumberland and Georgia. He was with Sherman in the march to the sea and the Carolinas and participated in the final surrender of Johnston's forces. He was Recorder-in-chief of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, Chairman of the U. S.

Gettysburg National Park Commission and Vice President and Trustee of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Returning to Philadelphia from the War in October of 1865, Colonel Nicholson later reported, "It was my good fortune to be invited on Saturday afternoons to the meetings of "Le Cercle autour du Poêle" [the literary equivalent of the "hot stove league"], at the old book store of John Pennington & Son." Here one could meet many distinguished writers and veterans of the War of 1861-1865, including George Allen, Samuel Lewis, Henry Rawle, Winthrop Sergeant, General Franz Sigel, Charles J. Stillé, Charles Sumner, John William Wallace and William Russell West. Nicholson determined to build a collection of books and other materials relating to the Civil War, both North and South, but deferred all collecting of naval material to Frederick Schober, who was then assembling a fine collection relating to the navy in the War and eliminated Lincolniana from his collection because his good friend, neighbor and fellow soldier, Major William H. Lambert was then gathering his great Lincoln collection (later sold at auction in 1914). He established a few rules which present day collectors and libraries would not accept. With few exceptions all of his books, pamphlets, manuscripts and periodical excerpts were rebound (all by the firm of Pawson & Nicholson). "Scurrilous" books were not knowingly added to the library, and if they did find their way to the book shelves were not listed in the catalogue of the collection.

Colonel Nicholson and Louis Philippe d'Orleans, Comte de Paris, were close friends and Nicholson edited the American edition of *History of the Civil War in America* and *The Battle of Gettysburg*, both written by the distinguished Frenchman. He was the editor and compiler of *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg*, and the author of a pamphlet, *The Gettysburg National Park*. He was responsible for what seems to be the first separate appearance in print of *A Letter from President Lincoln to General Joseph Hooker, January 26, 1863*, a four page publication issued in an edition of only 45 copies in 1879, the year General Hooker died.

In 1914, by a strange coincidence the same year in which the Lambert Collection of Lincolniana was catalogued and sold by The Anderson Galleries in New York, the catalogue of the Nicholson Library was issued:

CATALOGUE/ OF/ LIBRARY/ OF/ BREVET LIEUTENANT-COLONEL/ JOHN  
PAGE NICHOLSON/ U.S. VOLS. A.M. LITT. D./ RELATING TO THE/ WAR OF  
THE REBELLION/ 1861-1866/ [short rule] /PHILADELPHIA/ 1914.  
300 copies privately printed, 16.8 x 25 cm., [4] — 1022 p., frontis., green  
buckram, John T. Palmer Co., Printers, Philadelphia, gilt top, uncut.

The catalogue is a curious, fascinating, useful work by a collector who

knew nothing of the technical requirements of the cataloguer or bibliographer. The arrangement is alphabetical with strange variations. All titles without a known author are listed in a separate section in alphabetical order by title; all anonymous titles beginning with "A" or "The" are listed under "A" or "T". All General Orders are listed in a single section and all titles relating to Army Reunions appear separately. With all of its imperfections it is nevertheless the most useful single Civil War bibliographical volume with the exception of the War Department, *Bibliography of State Participation in the Civil War 1861-1865*. The full text of each title page is printed along with additional data, which while not listed in a professional manner, are helpful to the collector, historian and student.

Nicholson extracted significant Civil War articles from leading periodicals and had them bound separately. By doing so he preserved this material and by listing same in his catalogue he constantly brings to our attention important writings we might otherwise overlook. The collector and antiquarian literally "drools" when he notes at the end of many of the catalogue entries the phrase "With autograph letter of author (or subject)." The collection was rich in manuscript material. The late Henry E. Huntington acquired the Nicholson collection of over 10,000 items comparatively early in his collecting career and it is now housed in the great Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Civil War researchers have not thoroughly examined this collection—this rich lode remains to be adequately mined. Colonel Nicholson died on March 8, 1922, just four months short of his eightieth birthday.

## *An Invitation To New Subscribers*

WITH THIS ISSUE, *Civil War History* publishes the second of its special issues, dealing with some one phase of the war period. Planned for the future are three more — dealing with Ohio and the Civil War, the music of the period, and the problems of finance which the war involved. In regular issues, with the publication of speeches and interesting original documents of the war years as well as manuscripts written by contemporary authors and chapters from forthcoming books, *Civil War History* endeavors to bring its readers a wide selection of material on this period.

IN FUTURE ISSUES, scholarly reconstructions of specific battles and campaigns will be presented, together with character studies of military and civilian leaders. Problems of supply, of diplomacy, of tactics will be considered. Other articles will be designed to give the most accurate evaluation possible of the nature of the United States at mid-nineteenth century: the amusements, interests and activities of a people.

READERS OF CIVIL WAR HISTORY will also find all of our regular features present: book reviews, notes and queries, notes for collectors, and work in progress reports. Maps, line drawings, and photostats will be used throughout. If you are not now a subscriber to the magazine and would like to receive it regularly (or want to send it to a friend), please fill out the blank below. Subscriptions will begin with the most recent issue, unless we are otherwise instructed.

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# Notes & Queries

EDITED BY BOYD B. STUTLER

517 Main Street

Charleston, West Virginia

THIS DEPARTMENT IS DESIGNED as an open forum for researchers and readers of *Civil War History* for questions on and discussions of phases of the Great Conflict and its personnel. Also for newly discovered or unrecorded sidelights of the war. Contributions are invited; address Notes and Queries Editor.

## QUERIES

### 27. *General Thomas Jordan, CSA:*

I am at work on a thesis which will cover one year in the life of General Thomas Jordan, who served as Chief of Staff to General Beauregard—the year 1869 to 1870 when he was a leader of the insurgents in Cuba. But I need data relating to his early life and Civil War service to round out the background of this Confederate officer. For a relatively important man in CSA military service, the information needed seems very elusive. Query: Can anyone tell me the present whereabouts of General Jordan's papers, if they exist, or furnish copies of letters or documents which may be helpful in my study? Also, I would like to have the names of his children or grand-children; it may be possible to track down the papers through some of his descendants.

Cornelius H. Bull III

### 28. *Loyalty Oaths for Virginia Unionists:*

The Convention which assembled at Wheeling, West Virginia, on June 11, 1861, for the purpose of organizing and restoring a loyal Union government of Virginia (a secession within a secession), adopted an ordinance on June 19 providing for an oath of loyalty to the United States,

"anything in the Constitution and laws of the State of Virginia, or the ordinances of the Convention which assembled at Richmond on the 13th day of February, 1861, to the contrary notwithstanding." The form of oath prescribed bound the subscriber to "uphold and defend the government of Virginia as vindicated and restored by the Convention which assembled at Wheeling on the 11th day of June, 1861." Later, an act of the Legislature of the Restored Government passed February 10, 1862, defined the classes required to take the oath, and also provided for the issuance of printed forms and for registers to be kept by the county clerks. Query: How widely was this act observed, and what records, individual forms and registers, have been preserved in county offices and private collections?

*Delf Norona*

29. *James A. Seddon, Confederate War Secretary:*

I am endeavoring to locate material on James Alexander Seddon, gifted Virginia lawyer and politician, who was Secretary of War for the Confederate States from November 22, 1862, to February 5, 1865. The data is being assembled for a biography which I expect to write as a doctoral dissertation under the direction of Dr. Fletcher Green at the University of North Carolina. When completed it will be the first full-scale study of the Secretary and the Confederate War Department and will, it is hoped, be a standard and definitive work on a little known aspect of Confederate history. Particularly helpful will be diaries which mention Seddon, correspondence between individuals and the CS War Department, letters to or from John Archibald Campbell or Albert Taylor Bledsoe, Assistant Secretaries, etc.

*Gerard F. O'Brien*

## ANSWERS

Query 16. *Iowa Cavalry at Pohick Church:*

Irwin L. Stein, History Department, Los Angeles Public Library, does not have a complete answer to the query posed by Colonel Henry S. Merrick (March, 1956), but does present an interesting theory. Mr. Stein writes: "There doesn't seem to be any record of Iowa Cavalry assigned anywhere in the East, but I wonder if the following suggestion is too outrageously fanciful? During the time when the 22nd Army Corps constituted the District and Department of Washington, some 14 or more regiments of the Veterans Reserve Corps served in it. Could it be that the Iowa cavalymen now belonged to the Veterans Reserve Corps? Men from the same area might naturally stick together, and nostalgia would account for their following their names with their old regimental designations rather than the new ones in the VRC."



*Query 19. 2nd and 3rd Texas Infantry Regiments:*

A number of readers responded to the query of Colonel Harold B. Simpson (March, 1956) about the organization and movements of the 2nd and 3rd Texas Infantry Regiments. A detailed account of the two units was furnished by Lester N. Fitzhugh, Lancaster, Texas, as follows:

The 2nd Texas Infantry Regiment was organized and accepted into Confederate service at Galveston, September, 1861. Its original commander, Colonel John C. Moore, was an 1849 graduate of the U. S. Military Academy, and its rank and file included many names distinguished in Robertson, Brazos, Galveston, Burleson, Gonzales and Jackson Counties. Sam Houston, Jr., son of the anti-secessionist ex-governor, was in a company commanded by the elder Houston's old comrade-in-arms, Dr. Ashbel Smith. The Regiment spent the winter of 1861-62 in the Galveston and Houston areas. Proceeding to Arkansas in March, 1862, it arrived at Helena too late to participate in the battle of Elk Horn Tavern. From Helena it traveled by boat and rail, via Memphis, to Corinth, Mississippi, arriving there on April 1, 1862.

At Corinth the 2nd Texas was brigaded under John J. Jackson, Withers' Division, Bragg's Corps, and with this organization took creditable part in the battle of Shiloh. It lost approximately one-third of its strength in killed, wounded and missing, two company commanders being among those dead. Colonel Moore was promoted to Brigadier General shortly after Shiloh and was given a brigade of which his 2nd Texas was a unit. The regimental command devolved on Lieutenant Colonel William P. Rogers. The Regiment was at Farmington and Iuka in the summer, and it played a most prominent part in the battle of Corinth in October, where Colonel Rogers was killed under circumstances so dramatic as to form a part of the folklore of both the Confederate and Union regiments engaged.

Rogers was succeeded by Ashbel Smith. The Regiment fought minor engagements during the fall and was sent to Vicksburg in December, 1862. It participated in the actions around that place in December and through the first half of 1863, and was in an exposed part of the line during the final siege of Vicksburg. Following surrender on July 4, 1863, and parole, almost all members of the regiment proceeded individually to Texas rather than to the parole camp at Demopolis, Alabama. This, presumably, was in defiance of constituted authority.

The regiment was reorganized at Houston later in the year, following the exchange of the Vicksburg prisoners, and served without distinction on the Texas coast for the remainder of the war. The regiment was never brigaded under any commander other than Jackson at Shiloh, and its original colonel, John C. Moore. It was not brigaded at all during its latter service in Texas. It was a good regiment early in the war, and had

it not had the misfortune to be at Vicksburg it might have been a distinguished one.

The 3rd Texas Infantry Regiment was organized in or about the town of Brownsville some time during the late fall or winter of 1861-62. Its companies assembled slowly, and details of its organization are more obscure, if possible, than is the case with many other Texas units. Predominance of German names among its officers, plus certain other factors relating to its organization and service, suggests persuasively that it drew most of its personnel from the area in and around San Antonio and the coastal counties below that city.

Commander of the Regiment throughout the war was Colonel Phillip N. Luckett; Lieutenant Colonel was Augustus C. Buchel, German-born graduate of the *Ecole Militaire*, Paris, a former military instructor in the Turkish Army of Ali Pasha, veteran of the Carlist War in Spain, member of Zachary Taylor's personal staff in the Mexican War, veteran of the Texas campaign against Cortina, and pre-Civil War collector of customs at the port of Indianola, Texas. Buchel was unquestionably one of the ablest regimental commanders Texas furnished the Confederacy, and his genius was ably employed during the first years of service of the 3rd Texas Infantry.

Fremantle in his *Diary*, (1954 edition, pp. 12-21), tells of meeting Luckett and Buchel on his arrival at Brownsville in the spring of 1863, and briefly gives his impression of these two officers and the appearance of their Regiment. Between the time of its organization and the spring of 1864 the 3rd Texas served at Brownsville and other points along the Texas coast, including Galveston, Velasco and Sabine Pass.

Buchel left the regiment (apparently early in 1863) to take command of the 1st Texas Cavalry; he was killed at the head of this unit at Pleasant Hill, Louisiana, in 1864. During Banks' Red River campaign the 3rd Texas was ordered to Louisiana, but arrived at Mansfield too late to participate in the battle at that place. The outfit was brigaded under General William Scurry, Walker's Division. During the last year of its service it marched and counter-marched in Louisiana and Arkansas, participating in the only fight in its career at Jenkin's Ferry, Arkansas. At the end of the war it was marched from Shreveport, Louisiana, to Hempstead, Texas, and disbanded.

The regiment is vaguely referred to in some works as having originally been composed of good material which deteriorated during its service on the Texas coast. It seems there is a coincidence of this decay and the departure of Buchel. Fremantle refers to Luckett as a physician in private life. He seems to have been a relatively uninspired commander, and his fame has been obscured by a grotesque error made by a typesetter who composed *Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, by a Private Soldier, (J. P. Blessington). This unknown printer misread Blessington's manu-

script and P. N. Luckett appeared as *P. N. Sackett*. To this day uncritical Texas historians, one of whom published a work in 1955, march the 3rd Texas Infantry about Louisiana in 1864-65 under command of the mythical "Colonel Sackett."

Others who answered the query, covering the same record as Reader Fitzhugh, were Ezra J. Warner, La Jolla, California; A. W. Squires, Togus, Maine; Townsend Hay, Black Mountain, North Carolina; and Irwin L. Stein, Los Angeles, California.

Query 24. *General Sickles' Leg*:

The recently published *Sickles the Incredible*, by W. A. Swanberg, (New York: Scribners. 1956), completely answered the query of Warren A. Reeder (June, 1956), about what happened to General Sickles' leg after amputation at Gettysburg. The circumstances of the wounding of the General and his immediate action is told in some detail, pp. 216-221. A note on p. 405 tells what happened to the leg and where it is today. The note reads: "Sickles' right tibia and fibula are still on display in a glass case at the Armed Forces Medical Museum in Washington. The exhibit card reads in part: 'The amputated leg was received at the Army Medical Museum in a rough coffin with a visiting card of General Sickles. On the card was written: 'With the compliments of Maj.-Gen. D.E.S., U.S. Vols.' It is said that after the war, the General would visit the museum from time to time, to see the bones preserved from his leg."

NOTES

*Lieutenant Crosley Tells of 3rd Iowa at Shiloh:*

The material from which history is made is contained in a graphic description of the battle at Shiloh, or Pittsburgh Landing, in an unpublished letter written by Lieutenant George W. Crosley, 3rd Iowa Infantry, to his sweetheart, Miss Edna M. Risdon, who lived in Nevada, Iowa. The regiment was so decimated in the action on the first day, Sunday, April 6, 1862, that of the three field officers and 24 company officers present for duty, young Lieutenant Crosley was the senior officer for duty at the beginning of the second day's battle, and commanded the regiment throughout the day.

The record of Lieutenant Crosley was no less distinguished than that of his regiment. He was born near New Haven, Ohio, March 4, 1839, and moved to Iowa with his parents in 1855. At the outbreak of the Civil War he enlisted in Company E, 3rd Iowa Volunteer Infantry, organized in Nevada, his home town, and was appointed First Sergeant; promoted to First Lieutenant on June 26, 1861, and Major on March 8, 1863. He was brevetted Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel, 3rd Iowa Infantry, and finished his war service as Major, Hancock's Veteran Corps; discharged May 11, 1865, at Washington, D. C.

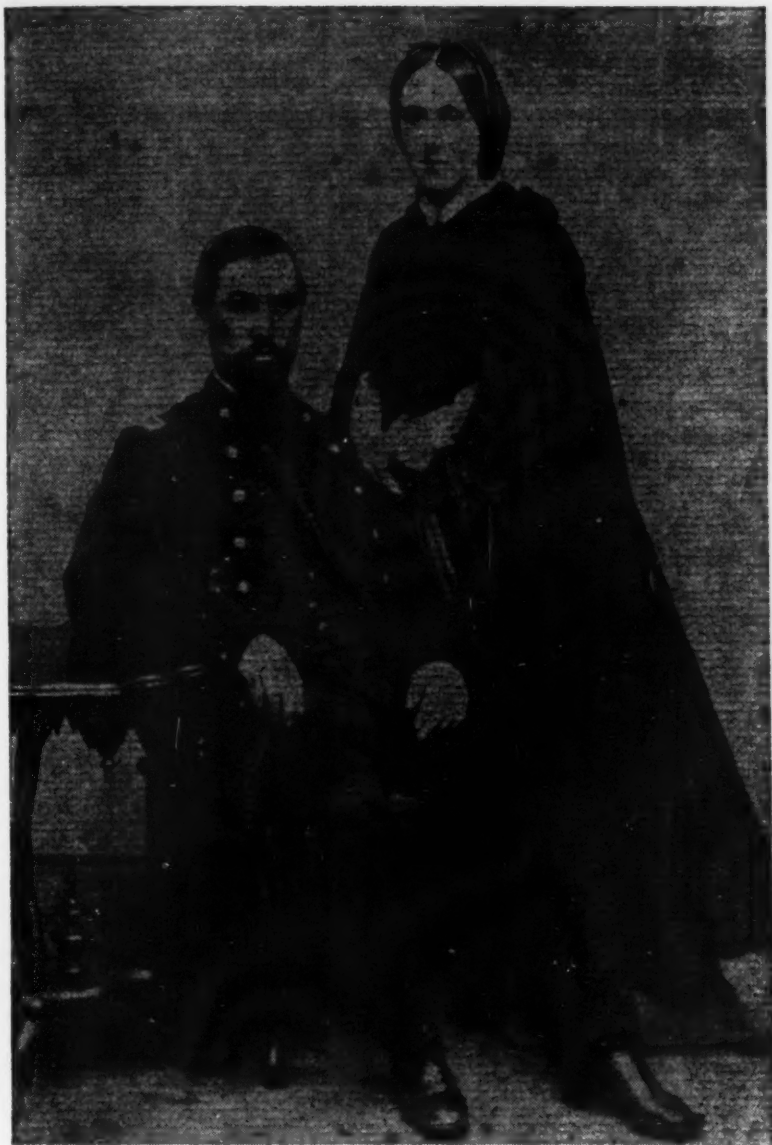
Major Crosley and Miss Risdon were married at Hopkinton, New York, on April 16, 1864, while he was on veterans' furlough. At the close of the war the young couple located at Webster City, Iowa, where he was postmaster, 1866-1873; sheriff, 1880-1884, served six years as warden of the State Penitentiary, and as State Military Historian edited the 6-volume history *Iowa and the Civil War*, a four-year work from 1907 to 1911. Colonel Crosley died on December 27, 1913; his wife, the Edna M. Risdon of the Shiloh letter, passed away on January 23, 1925. The Shiloh letter is furnished *Civil War History* through the courtesy of their son, Varick C. Crosley, of Webster City, Iowa. The letter follows:

Camp 3rd Iowa Infantry  
Near Pittsburg Landg, April 10/62

My dear Edna,

I wrote you a hasty note the day after the Battle merely for the purpose of letting you know that I was safe. I now sit down to attempt a task I fear I am incapable of performing, that of giving you some account of the terrible Battle of Pittsburgh Landing. it were superfluous in me to attempt to describe correctly the scenes of the Battle field or the more terrible scenes of the conflict of which I was a participant but not a witness. A soldier never sees a Battle. he may be in the thickest of the fight but his duties call his attention to the conflict that is raging immediately around him and he sees only what transpires when his Regiment or Brigade is engaged, but it was my melancholy privilege to ride over the Battle field after the struggle was over. you have doubtless read dear Edna many accounts of the horrible scenes presented on the Battle field. I will only say that any attempt at description by me must fall far short of the reality. besides it is not a pleasant subject to dwell upon. just call to mind all the horrible scenes of which you ever read or heard. then put them all together and you can form some faint conception of the scenes I witnessed in passing over this bloody Battle field of Pittsburgh Landing. While I write men are marching past to the sound of solemn music following some poor comrade to his last resting place. the hills are echoing with volleys of musketry fired over the grave of a dead soldier. this is the 3rd day after the Battle and still great numbers of the enemy are still lying upon the field. our men first paid the last sad rites of burial to our own dead and then commenced collecting the dead of the enemy. The loss of the Rebels was immense. our own was very great. It is impossible to ascertain the loss of our army at this time. I presume you will get it in the paper as soon as we will know. We now know the correct loss of our Regt. It stands as follows. Killed, 26; wounded, 137; missing & taken prisoner, 43; total, 206.

Many of the missing men doubtless wounded and taken prisoners. several are known to have been taken by the enemy. I was commanding Co. F during the Battle Sunday. Their loss and the loss of my own Co. E were about equal. they suffered most severely of any of the companies of our Regt. having 5 killed in each 13 wounded and 4 or 5 each missing. the Regt went into action with 600 men, 3 field and 24 company officers. out of the 27 commissioned



This picture of Colonel (then Major) and Mrs. George W. Crosley was taken April 18, 1864 at Boston, while the couple was on their honeymoon.

officers who went into action 15 were wounded and 4 taken prisoner. all the capt were wounded but one. and he to his shame be it said did not come upon the field the 2nd day of the fight. for the honor of the Regt I will not mention his name. We went into action early Sunday 6th were engaged all day till 4 PM. when our whole line fell back having been flanked by the enemy on the right & left. 3 Iowa Regts. the 8th 12th & 14th were surrounded by the enemy and after the most desperate fighting to cut their way through were compeled to surrender. our Regt was nearly cut off at one time and our escape seemed hopeless. but the brave 3rd finally succeeded in forcing their way through and fell back upon our reinforcements. who arriving just at the moment when all seemed lost saved the day.

The enemy fell back and took up a strong position and the fight now raged between the artillery. the few officers that were left—none above the rank of Lieut now commenced to rally the Iowa 3rd. Our Regt had become scattered and it was some time before we again got formed. We succeeded in getting 200 men in ranks. I found myself senior officer in command of the Remnant of the Regt. We immediately advanced and took up our position directly under the fire of the enemies artillery. We were burning with impatience to be allowed to make a charge upon the enemies Battery but the order was not given and we were compeled to stand their galling fire without being able to return it. Night closed upon the scene amid the thundering of artillery and the bursting of shells. the scene became one of intense and thrilling Grandeur. Our heavy guns would belch forth a blazing stream of fire and the tremendous reports would shake the ground like an earthquake and the forest around was lighted up with the blazing of the guns as they belched forth death and destruction. Many shells struck and exploded near me. solid shot came tearing through the trees above our heads. cutting off limbs and hurling them down to the ground. Men fell around me almost every moment. but I had got used to this and could stand and witness the terrific scene with calmness and composure. only waiting for the order to advance. I felt that my life was no dearer and sweeter to me than was many another brave young man who had fallen upon that fatal day. death had no terrors for me then for I knew that I was in performance of the noblest duty—except the worship of God that man is ever permitted to perform here upon earth.

I am deeply sensible of the gratitude I owe to that Invisible being who has brought me through these trying scenes of danger and death. but to return to my naration, the enemies guns were at length silenced by our Gun Boats getting into position and commencing to play upon them. Tired with our hard days fighting we lay down upon our arms to rest. but, about midnight it commenced raining and we passed a miserable night. during the night we were reinforced by a portion of Gen Buels [Buell] army. Early in the morning the Battle again opened by our forces making the attack on the enemies right. our little Brigade was soon ordered forward. We marched forward about half a mile when we came under the enemies Artillery fire. the shells came in thick and fast and were constantly bursting around us. but we had got used to this and continued to steadily advance towards our position on the right. We soon engaged the enemy in strong force and after some ten minutes of very severe fighting drove him in confusion from one of our camps which they had oc-



cupied during the night. We advanced rapidly upon the retreating rebels. Took one fine Battery of 6 Pieces at the point of the bayonet and captured several prisoners. But just at this time the enemy was coming back again having been heavily reinforced. they advanced with their usual impetuosity and proving to strong for us we were again compeled to fall back. which we did in splendid order until reinforcements arrived to our aid and the enemy was again driven back.

The two great armies were now engaged in another fierce conflict along our whole line extending over 4 miles in length. Brigades were constantly held in reserve and as fast as one Regt. became cut up and out of ammunition another would promptly come to their relief. the Rebels fought desperately chargeing with wild impetuosity on our lines Seeming determined to drive us back or perish in the attempt. but they everywhere met a firm and determined front. our troops fought with the greatest coolness & courage successfully repulsing the enemy at all points. the Battle raged with unabated fury until 4 oclock PM. When the enemy began to waver and fall back. Our troops following up their advantage pushed after them and they were soon in full retreat on the road towards Corinth. Our cavalry now came pouring forward and dashing after the retreating enemy threw them into confusion and the slaughter was terrible. Our Brigade soon halted being too much exhausted to advance farther. We soon received the joyful intelligence that the enemy was retreating in great confusion and that their was no prospect of their making another stand that night. soon after order came for us to return to camp. Then ended one of the hardest fought Battles ever witnessed on the American continent.

We had met the flower of the southern army and drove them from the field. although the first day they succeeded in outflanking us and taking quite a large number of prisoners we showed them on the 2nd day that northern obstinacy and coolness was more than a match for southern impetuosity. The forces engaged were probably nearly equal. over 100,000 on both sides. the Battle was fought on a scale of tremendous magnitude. it has fully demonstrated the superiority of our arms and I think has satisfied the rebels that our army cannot be conquered. if they are not satisfied with this experiment we are ready to try them again our army is in fine condition and full of enthusiasm over our late victory.

Col. Scott was not able to go into action. he lay upon the Boat chafing like a caged lion during the progress of the Battle. he is now with us in camp and if we go into action again soon he will probably be with us. Lieut. Ferguson of Story Co. was killed in the engagement Sunday. the Regt to which he belonged —(the 12th Iowa) was taken prisoners. Col Scott had a brother wounded in one of the Ohio Regts. I do not think of any others among the killed with whom you were acquainted. I have already protracted this letter to a greater length than I had intended and still there is much that I would like to say. My dear Edna I have thought of you a hundred times while engaged in Battle. your image would rise before me in the heat of conflict and the thought that if I fell there was one who would remember and mourn for me as the idol of her hearts best affection. cheered my heart in that dark hour of danger. it affords me the greatest pleasure to say that I have done my whole duty and won honor for myself and for you. I have received congratulations of all in our Regt for

my conduct in the Battle and was complimented by the General commanding the Brigade and Division in which our Regt served.

I am well aware I am using a good deal of egotism in saying this much of myself, but I know that my own dear Edna will feel a deep interest in whatever honor or distinction I may have won for myself & wish her to share it with me. the thought that I can return after this war is over with the full confidence of having done my duty to my country and claim my own dear Edna is a cheering one and one in which I wish you to share.

Let me have your earnest prayers dear Edna for ere tomorrows sun shall set I may again be engaged in Battle. Commend me to your Parents & friends.

I am as ever Dear Edna

Your  
George

#### *A Note on Realism in Civil War Fiction:*

(By James Stronks, University of Illinois, Chicago)

In the March, 1956, number of this magazine, Mr. Lawrence S. Thompson's good humored and ironic survey of "The Civil War in Fiction" does not pretend to exhaust its fat topic. But unfortunately it fails to mention the war stories of such valuable literary men as Sidney Lanier in the South and Harold Frederic in the North. Perhaps more important to students of the Civil War, it overlooks Major Joseph Kirkland's pioneer realism about the fighting in the West, *The Captain of Company K*, (serial 1889, book 1891).

Kirkland enlisted in Company C of the 12th Illinois in the war's earliest weeks, and after election to a Lieutenancy, rose to Captain and Major, becoming for a time aide-de-camp to General McClellan. He saw action at Gaine's Mills, Malvern Hill, the Seven Days' battles, and Antietam. Twenty years after the war, Kirkland, then a Chicago lawyer, published two novels of early western life, *Zury, the Meanest Man in Spring County* (1887), and *The McVeys* (1888), ruggedly realistic for their day and still impressive. But the veteran had another story in his system which he itched to put before a reading public whose good sense, he felt, was being abused by Civil War romances about chivalric goings-on between doughty blue and valiant gray. Kirkland aimed to de-glorify soldiering and to give the infantryman's mud-level view of training camp, bivouac and battle. With the irony of an old infantry lieutenant, he dedicated *The Captain of Company K* "to the surviving men of the firing line, the men who could see the enemy in front of them with the naked eye, while they would have needed a field-glass to see the History-Makers behind them . . ."

The novel follows a volunteer regiment from enlistment in Chicago to training at downstate Cairo, through various rookie skirmishes, to intense

baptism of fire at Fort Donelson and Shiloh. Much of the "fiction" consists of factual sketches as sharp as a newsreel, accurate in dialogue and bristling with vivid details. The viewpoint is that of a sensitive new captain, Will Fargeon, whose problems in tactics and administration are technically accurate and whose own gradual seasoning is admirably convincing. For him the war is a dirty, unromantic business, by turns boring, hectic, confused, glorious, heart-breaking. This is not to claim that Kirkland's realism is unflinching, for it is not; and the bitter pill of his hard-headed history of Company K is periodically sugar-coated by a coy and saccharine love story.

Mr. Thompson's useful paper rightly emphasizes J. W. DeForest's fine novel about the Civil War, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* (1867), and Stephen Crane's classic *Red Badge of Courage* (1895). But because of its honest realism about military life and battle, Major Kirkland's *Captain of Company K* also deserves a respected, if modest, niche in the fiction of the Civil War.

## A Negro's Account of the Wild Cat Retreat

A GENTLEMAN WHOSE SLAVE ACCOMPANIED a young confederate [sic] officer on the Wild Cat expedition, asked the darky on his return to Nashville, how long the army was on the march from its encampment to the battlefield. "About four days," was the reply. "Well, how long were they in marching back?" "About two days, massa." "Why, how is that, Joe? Could the men travel any faster back, when they were broken down with four days march and a severe fight, than they travelled forward after a good rest in camp?" "Oh! I'll tell you what made the difference, massa," said old Joe; "it was the music. They marched toward Wild Cat to the tune of Dixie. When they marched back, the tune was: 'Fire in the mountains — run, boys, run!'"

## Death of Ben McCulloch

THE REBEL CHIEF WAS STRUCK BY A MINIE rifle-ball in his left breast, but lived several hours after. A letter from the camp says:

"He died of his wounds about eleven o'clock the same night, though he insisted that he was not born to be killed by a Yankee.

"A few minutes before he expired, his physician assured him he had but a very brief time to live. At this Ben looked up incredulously, and saying, 'O hell!' turned away his head and never spoke after."

*Lansing Republican*, April 2.

## Paradise

AMONG THE LETTERS FOUND IN THE REBEL CAMP at Roanoke Island, was one from a young lady in the south to her lover in the rebel army, in which she says: "I hope we shall see each other again here; but if we do not, I hope we shall meet in heaven, *where there will be no Yankees.*"

*Cincinnati Gazette*, March 18.

# The Continuing War

EDITED BY RICHARD B. HARWELL

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Richmond, Virginia

DID RHETT BUTLER RETURN TO SCARLETT O'HARA? After twenty years millions of readers would still like to know. What would happen to the strong-willed Georgia woman without him? "My dear," said Rhett, "I don't give a damn." But a generation of readers did, and the public continues to read Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, if not as The Great American Novel, certainly as the great American yarn.

Published twenty years ago (June 30, 1936), *Gone With the Wind* took the American public by storm. In scarcely three months after its appearance it sold more than half a million copies, sometimes at the rate of fifty thousand a day. By the end of 1936 the total was approaching the million mark and had passed it long before the book's first anniversary. It was the publishing phenomenon of the century. Motion picture rights were sold for a record (yet a bargain) price. Almost overnight its author became a person of international fame.

GWTW is still one of the most widely read books in the world. Total sales are over eight million copies. Its printings in English have run to more than five million copies. Every year it sells more than most best sellers. As late as 1954, in only nine months time, the Doubleday reprints alone (exclusive of Macmillan's editions) sold over 861,000 copies. (Later figures are not yet available.) It is available in twenty-four languages and in editions from thirty-three countries. Its appeal has been almost as strong in Germany, Scandinavia, or Japan as in the Old South. Severely trimmed for its movie version, it was the longest commercially successful motion picture at the time of its release. The length of its runs were equally record-breaking. Its Atlanta opening in 1939 outshone the gaudiest Hollywood gala. Its continuous runs in London



Poster used to advertise *Gone With the Wind* in Warsaw. The original is now in the Atlanta Public Library.



and Berlin put even Atlanta to shame. Five times around the circuit of United States theatres, the film is still a fabulously valuable property and (at approximately \$40,000,000) is the record money-making movie of all time.

If there is a special secret that brought success to *Gone With the Wind*, no one has been able to discover it — or, if to discover it, no one has been able to duplicate it. It was the right novel at the right time, a rousing tale of man and woman told against the background of war and of comeback from the misfortunes of war. It was eagerly gobbled up by a depression audience equally hungry for success and for entertainment. For, along with its other merits, GWTW was a bargain: 1,037 pages of first-rate entertainment for only \$3.00.

From the beginning *Gone With the Wind* was received enthusiastically by the public. In Atlanta bookstores copies were virtually rationed as demand ran ahead of supply. Generous at first in inscribing copies, Miss Mitchell, after sales had passed the million mark, was forced to refuse the multitudinous requests for autographed copies and to attempt a retreat to a private life she would never know again. Strangers besieged her. Reporters hounded her. Only in the months immediately before her tragic death in August 1949 was she able to enjoy in relative peace a quiet, unostentatious apartment with her husband, John R. Marsh.

Critical reception of *Gone With the Wind* was almost as enthusiastic as the public's. Sober judges of good books acclaimed it. Novelist Ellen Glasgow wrote: "*Gone With the Wind* is a fearless portrayal, romantic yet not sentimental, of a lost tradition and a way of life." Another Southern author of a distinguished novel of the Confederacy, Charleston's DuBose Heyward, called it "as fine a novel as has come out of our generation." Julia Peterkin nominated it "the best novel that has ever come out of the South . . . unsurpassed in the whole of American writing." In the *New York Times* Donald Adams agreed that it was "the best Civil War novel that has yet been written." He wrote: "It is an extraordinary blending of romantic and realistic treatment." Stephen Vincent Benet praised it in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. Historian Henry Steele Commager rhapsodized in the *New York Herald Tribune*: "The story told with such sincerity and passion, illuminated by such understanding, woven of the stuff of history and of disciplined imagination is endlessly interesting. It is a dramatic recreation of life itself."

If a personal note can be injected here, this reviewer wrote in July 1936: "Miss Mitchell superbly weaves the background into her story. Her characters actually walk the streets of Atlanta. They seem to grow before the eyes of the reader. Their actions are as consistent and yet as unpredictable as the actions of your next-door neighbor. The reader learns to know the rascalion Captain Butler, the wilful opportunist who is

Scarlett, Ashley and Melanie Wilkes, sensitive products of the Old South who cannot adjust themselves to a new era . . . It is a true expression of the most dramatic era of Southern history."

Later, in his introduction to *The South to Posterity*, Dr. Douglas S. Freeman gave credit to *Gone With the Wind* (along with Clifford Dowdley's *Bugles Blow No More*) for giving impetus to the surge of interest in Civil War books that marked the late 1930's and that has continued ever since. By almost any standard, *Gone With the Wind* is a landmark book, a signal success in the long and continuing stream of Civil War novels that encompasses over a thousand titles. It is the book that long ago had been prophesied by Confederate novelist John Esten Cooke in the 1867 introduction to his *Wearing of the Gray*: "Ahl those 'romances of the war!' The trifling species will come first, in which the Southern leaders will be made to talk an incredible gibberish, and figure in the most tremendous adventures . . . But then will come the better order of things, when writers like Walter Scott will conscientiously collect the real facts, and make some new 'Waverly' or 'Legend of Montrose.'"

The years have seen Miss Mitchell's work discounted but never torn down, nor yet bettered. University theses have been undertaken to attack it—and completed to praise it. Amateur and professional historians have combed it for historical flaws to find only two inconsequential anachronisms in all its hundreds of thousands of words. One thesis went to great length to explain how Scarlett could not have known to leave Atlanta when she did because she could not have heard by then of the Confederate defeat at Jonesboro. Miss Mitchell proudly produced the record of the Confederate telegrapher showing at what time the news reached Atlanta. And so with item after item. History was on the side of Margaret Mitchell because she had been on the side of accurate history in learning her story fully and working it into her fiction with infinite care.

Miss Mitchell herself wrote: "As for the checking of data, both historic and social . . . I've never accurately counted up the references, but they ran far into the thousands. For instance, take the chapters about the fighting around Atlanta, the fall of the city, and escape of the characters from the city. There were hundreds of things to be checked . . . Then of course there were hundreds of things like when hoop skirts went out and bustles came in, and what ladies made shoes out of during the blockade and how much cotton sold for in Liverpool in 1863 (\$1.91 per pound—this section would surely be out of the trenches now if we could get that price today!), and what color were the pants of the Louisiana 'Tiger' Zouaves and did Confederate officers wear gold braid on their shoulders or only on cuffs and collars? And did pistols work with percussion caps, and how far could pre-war squirrel guns shoot? And—well, hundreds of other unimportant but important things."

A novel does not flow smoothly from its author's pen. (The first chapter of *Gone With the Wind* was the seventieth revision and was still regarded by Miss Mitchell as the weakest of the book.) It is impossible to say when the idea of a novel germinated. But, in a very real sense, Margaret Mitchell grew up to write *Gone With the Wind*. She grew up when Atlanta was burgeoning from a small Southern city to the metropolis of the Southeast, when "the Atlanta spirit" was the envy of its older neighbors. Her family was steeped in the traditions of the Confederacy and of North Georgia. Her father and brothers were amateurs of history. "I chose the Civil War period to write about," she said, "because I was raised on it. As a child I listened for hours on Sunday afternoons to stories of fighting in Virginia and Georgia, to the horrors of Sherman's approach, his final arrival and the burning and looting, and the way the refugees crowded the trains and the roads to Macon . . . I heard everything in the world except that the Confederates lost the war. When I was ten years old, it was a violent shock to learn that General Lee had been licked. I didn't believe it when I heard it. And I thought it had all happened just a few years before I was born."

*Gone With the Wind* was in her blood. It was apprenticed in writing for the *Atlanta Journal Magazine*. It was actually begun in 1926 and worked on sporadically, piece-meal—but frequently—for the next several years. It was not written consecutively. Instead, each chapter was written as a unit as the author felt equipped to undertake it. Evidence of the merit of this system is the fact that Chapter XLV, for example, stands as a remarkably fine short story when lifted bodily from the novel. The focal point of Atlanta's white collar Bohemians, the home of Margaret and John Marsh was a center of young intellectual life in the twenties. But only a few of Miss Mitchell's intimates knew she was writing a novel. To those few it was, jokingly, The Great American Novel. A very few accompanied her on Sunday afternoon jaunts to Clayton and Henry Counties to learn the land she would make the site of Tara. One or two true confidants heard her describe the principal characters of her story. But only her husband ever read the manuscript until H.S. Latham called in Atlanta in the spring of 1935 on a scouting trip for the Macmillan Company. After considerable hesitation Miss Mitchell showed him her work, still untitled, set aside since its virtual completion in 1929, and no longer referred to, even in fun, as The Great American Novel. The rest of the story is the greatest saga of American publishing history.

Mr. Latham knew with his first reading of the unrevised manuscript that he had a hit. A contract was signed. Miss Mitchell hoped earnestly that the book would sell enough copies to pay the publishers for their trouble in publishing it; they had been so nice to be interested. Revisions were begun, and the author put in eight months of hard work rechecking every fact. But there was still no title. At first "Tomorrow Is Another

Day"—a one-line summary of Scarlett's philosophy—was the working title. Then the title was "Tote the Weary Load." Finally inspiration came from Ernest Dowson's poem "Cynara." GONE WITH THE WIND. Author and publisher liked the new title. They would soon learn the public liked it too.

*Gone With the Wind* and Margaret Mitchell became part of the American scene. The years have not slowed the racing narrative of the novel, and success did not tarnish the straightforward charm of its author. Though she fled a besieging public of strangers, Miss Mitchell loved people, loved to be with them, and loved to talk to them. Her charm and brilliance were best reflected in her ability to tell a story. One is doubly conscious of this if he attempts to put her conversational stories on paper. The charm is liable to disappear, and he realizes that it was essentially not the story, but Miss Mitchell herself who was so entertaining.

Would she have written another novel? Only she knew, if she did. But writing gets in the blood. And, as her brother says, "She had a pencil in her hand all the time since she learned to write. She wrote continually." By the time of her death she had made tentative notes for one novel of Southern refugee life in Brazil but had put them aside. And she was full of ideas for further work: another novel of North Georgia, a novel of the 1920's, a play which would be a comedy based on her own experiences as the author of a bestseller. Perhaps she would never have the chance to write them, but time, at last, was beginning to open up for her. Whether or not, however, she would have written another novel, she had no intention of doing a sequel to GWTW and she, most positively, would never have published another book until she was sure it was good, until she was sure it would compare favorably with *Gone With the Wind*.

## Book Reviews

EDITED BY CHARLES T. MILLER

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*Lincoln Reconsidered.* By David Donald. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1956. Pp. xiii, 200, xiv. \$3.00.)

THE AUTHOR'S FIRST SENTENCES in his Introduction are: "About no other American have so many words been written as about Abraham Lincoln. Jay Monaghan's *Lincoln Bibliography* requires 1,019 pages merely to list the books and pamphlets published before 1939, when even the experts lost count. On library shelves the multi-volumed biographies by Nicolay and Hay, Sandburg, and Randall and Current stand cover to cover with *Lincoln Never Smoked a Cigarette* and *Abraham Lincoln on the Coming of the Caterpillar Tractor*."

A reviewer's first sentence might well ask this question of the author: "If what you say is true, then how can you defend adding one more stone to that tremendous verbal mountain?"

Now that scholarship has worked over the astonishingly vast amount of facts about the American past which have been preserved, there remains to do just what Mr. Donald has so brilliantly, and amusingly, done. He has interpreted the Lincoln record in his own original way. "There must be more historians of the Civil War than there were generals fighting in it," he remarks, "and of the two groups, the historians are the more belligerent." But he is not simply one more historian angrily ordering his divisions of facts into action. He is the meditative man, for whom the facts have little value until their sense and meaning have been revealed. This book is a fine revealer.

Mr. Donald's first concern is to see behind the legend, both behind the monster that some people saw (what Senator Saulsbury of Delaware called the "hideous form of Abraham Lincoln"), and behind the sainted figure created after his death. Lincoln once commented, "For such an awkward fellow,

I am pretty sure-footed. It used to take a pretty dextrous man to throw me." This is the line Mr. Donald takes, that behind the legend there was a sturdy fellow, sure on his feet, practical in his grasp of the war's means as well as idealistic in his hope for its ends. At the end of his chapter on Lincoln as politician, the author writes one of his fine insights: "By dominating his party, securing a renomination, and winning re-election, a superb politician had gained the opportunity of becoming a superb statesman."

Lincoln is shown here not to have been above party, but wholly involved in the workings of caucus, convention, and the crucial vote. He was not an angel flying into the White House on immaculate wings, but a Midwest lawyer riding in on a horse. He knew the turns in the political road and the persuasions of the delegate-filled room. He must have read the New York *Herald's* editorial shouting that "President Lincoln is a joke incarnated. His election was a very sorry joke." An offer of invitations to the White House and an appointment to France changed the whole attitude of the *Herald* abruptly.

Mr. Donald's discussion of Lincoln's remark that "My policy is to have no policy" is one of the shrewdest passages of the book. He shows how Lincoln's secrecy, his passivity, his essential pragmatism were indispensable to deal with the bitter and violent oppositions in his own government. Any rigidity of policy would have been utterly unworkable.

The author's discussion of northern abolitionists is superb. He accounts for them in this way:

These young men and women who reached maturity in the 1830's faced a strange and hostile world. Social and economic leadership was being transferred from the country to the city, from the farmer to the manufacturer, from the preacher to the corporation attorney. Too distinguished a family, too gentle an education, too nice a morality were handicaps in the bustling world of business. Expecting to lead, these young people found no followers. They were an elite without function, a displaced class in American society.

However heavily social a view this may be, it is certainly one to set alongside the traditional one of the abolitionist as a moral thunderer.

Concerning the Republican Radicals, the author is equally imaginative, proving their great diversity, and proving as well that no more than any other group can they be made into the villains of the war, however harsh a judgment one may make of them as men. The steady conflict between Sumner and Lincoln is one more instance of the President's steering his course, like the Western river pilots, from point to point, planning ahead no farther than they can see. He bore Sumner's criticism and used his talent.

It may now be time, says Mr. Donald, "to discard the Malevolent Radical, along with the Copperhead Democrat and the Diabolical Southerner, as a stereotyped figure of evil." In that wisdom is the book written. There is probably more penetration into Lincoln's motives and attitudes in these 200 pages than can be found in many thousands of carefully compiled facts. The prose is witty and sharp, a model for historians.

PAUL ENGLE

Stone City, Iowa.



*Robert E. Lee.* By Earl Schenck Miers. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1956. Pp. 203, viii. \$2.50.)

*The Death of Lee: The Southern Collegian, October 15, 1870.* Edited by Richard B. Harwell. (Atlanta: Emory University Library. 1956. Pp. 11, with facsimile. \$0.75.)

THE FIRST OF THESE ITEMS is one of the "Great Lives in Brief" series being published by Alfred A. Knopf. This reviewer was somewhat skeptical that any author could, as the jacket blurb stated, capture "the essence of one of the most fascinating figures in our history" within the limited compass of 200 pages. Mr. Miers, contrary to expectations, has done a very fine job indeed. His note on sources indicates a wide range of background, and his easy, readable style makes the book an extremely pleasant experience. He is at once able to show how Lee the man and Lee the legend emerge from the smoke and battle of the Civil War. Yet he also reminds us of Lee's faults and foibles without detracting from the larger grandeur of his character.

This is, of course, a book for the general reader. Historians may find a bone or two to pick with the author. Like most biographers, he sets up villains for his hero to overcome, and some readers will feel that the former are perhaps a little roughly handled, particularly "Old Joe" Johnston. One might also question whether Ulysses Grant deserves to be credited with the temperament of a poet and the adjectives "daring," "brilliant," and "passionately sensitive" (pp. 166-167).

With Lee as the central character it is only natural that the author should ignore or minimize action outside the theater of the Army of Northern Virginia; yet there is perhaps too strong a tendency to depict the collapse of the Confederacy as the collapse of Lee's army. Students of military strategy, notably Liddell Hart, point out that the war was won (or lost) in the West with the loss of the Mississippi and Sherman's march to the sea. But these defects, if such they are, do not detract from the excellence of Mr. Miers' work. Neither do such minor slips as referring to the towering John B. Hood as "little" (p. 84) and the misspelling of Catlett's ("Cutlett's") Station (p. 94) and Governor John Letcher ("Lechter," p. 28). All in all, one is left with the feeling that Mr. Miers deserves his publisher's statement that he has given us a "vivid and penetrating portrait" of General Lee.

Emory University Press has published a pamphlet which contains a facsimile of the Washington College student paper presenting the story of General Lee's death at Lexington, Virginia, where he was the college's first post-war president. Also included are resolutions of the student body, faculty, and others. A brief, excellent introduction by Richard Harwell tells of General Lee's work in reviving the college from its wartime collapse and of the significance of the "inheritance of character" which he left the South.

JOHN PANCAKE

Goshen Pass, Virginia

*Jefferson Davis: American Patriot, 1808-1861.* By Hudson Strode. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1955. Pp. xx, 460. \$6.75.)

WITH AN EARLIER BIOGRAPHER, Landon Knight, Hudson Strode agrees that Jefferson Davis is "the most misunderstood man in history." Mr. Strode became interested in Davis when Sigrid Undset asserted on a visit in 1942 that Davis's faults have been magnified by historians and biographers, his virtues forgotten. When she asked, "Why is he not given his due?" no satisfying answer was forthcoming.

Not until 1951, however, did Mr. Strode's sympathy with Davis become active. In going through the papers of his mother-in-law, an admirer of Davis, Mr. Strode became indignant when he read a newspaper clipping describing the "ironing" of Davis after his capture by the Union forces and his imprisonment at Fortress Monroe. This gratuitous humiliation of a proud and well-meaning man apparently became symbolic to Mr. Strode of a career whose brilliance was obscured in later times through personal misfortune and distortions of fact. That Davis himself anticipated his ultimate fate if he failed as president of a new country, may be seen in his own comments upon some disgruntled office-seekers — comments which conclude the present volume: "If we succeed, we shall hear nothing of these malcontents. If we do not, then I shall be held accountable by friends as well as foes. I will do my best, and God will give me strength to bear whatever comes."

Whether Mr. Strode will be able to revise conclusively the general impression that Davis was "a faulty politician" and "a cold human being and an irascible, driven leader, who lacked the ability to steer the Confederacy to success" must await the completion of the biography. In the second volume, the more controversial aspects of Davis's personality and career will be interpreted: the contentions with the "states-rights" group in the South led by Rhett, Yancey, Stephens, and Toombs; the relief of General Joseph Johnston during the crisis in Georgia in 1864; and the retention of Judah P. Benjamin in the cabinet after his censure by the Confederate Congress. Since the sincerity, the high-mindedness and the accomplishments of the pre-Civil War Davis have been conceded, at least by scholars, the author's aim of humanizing Davis has undoubtedly been easier to encompass in this first volume than it may be in the second. In depicting Jefferson Davis, the vital human being, Mr. Strode analyzes perceptively his tragic first marriage to Sarah Knox Taylor (she died of malaria three months after the wedding); his relationship, at first strained and later cordial, with his first father-in-law, Zachary Taylor; his second marriage to the demanding but devoted Varina Howell; and the lifelong influence upon him of his elder brother, Joseph.

Mr. Strode has done much in this sympathetic portrayal of the younger Davis to rehabilitate him as an "American patriot." In analyzing his contributions to American statesmanship, Mr. Strode rightly regards his tenure as Secretary of War under Franklin Pierce as the high point of his earlier career. More than with the Confederate presidency, man and position were admirably suited to one another. The conciliation of rival factions was not a paramount issue in the

cabinet position, and Davis's military experience and administrative genius made him a success. Ironically, as Secretary of War, Davis strengthened administratively and strategically the army which, a few years later, was to be deployed against the Confederacy. He increased the size of the army by two regiments, strengthened coastal defences, sent commissions abroad to examine foreign military establishments, and secured additional appropriations for West Point. He also displayed constructive vision in his plans for a trans-continental railroad (the four roads later built to the Pacific follow approximately the routes he sketched), in his urging that Cuba be annexed when Spain seemed willing to negotiate, and in helping to arrange the Gadsden Purchase.

Davis's interest in these matters, however, was not so exclusively national as Mr. Strode implies: he also desired to provide the South with additional territory into which to expand and with outlet ports on the Pacific. If, as the author emphasizes, Davis, unlike many other political leaders in the pre-War South, was nation-minded before he was section-minded, he was section-minded to a greater degree than Mr. Strode indicates. At the eleventh hour, his devotion to the Union did lead him still to seek some workable compromise between North and South. With as great reluctance as Lincoln, he saw the Union split apart; to him the disruption of the Union became "a great, though not the greatest, calamity." Like Lincoln, Davis hoped that slavery could be gradually eliminated, but, unlike Lincoln, he saw no hope for that eventuality if slavery were to be excluded from the territories. He deplored also the tendency on both sides to make of slavery an issue resulting always in a contention for political power. A man of noble character, he yet failed to see that slavery in itself was morally unjustifiable; the lack of self-conflict on this issue Mr. Strode plays down, and also the fact that Davis came too close, in his own values, to an uncritical acceptance of the ethos of the Southern planter aristocracy.

From the present biography, Jefferson Davis emerges a live, human, and sympathetic figure. Written with a clear, carefully modulated style, this book provides, through its authentic tone and thoroughness of method, not so much a vindication of Davis as an informed presentation of facts which speak for themselves. It will be interesting to discover, then, how the facts will affect the traditional view of the man in later career in Mr. Strode's forthcoming volume, *Jefferson Davis: Confederate President*.

FREDERICK P. W. McDOWELL

Iowa City, Iowa.

*Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera.* By James D. Horan. (New York: Crown Publishers. 1955. Pp. 244. \$7.50.)

*Civil War in Pictures.* By Fletcher Pratt. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1955. Pp. 256. \$10.00.)

THE APPROACH OF THE CIVIL WAR CENTENNIAL has brought about an ever-increasing number of histories, memoirs, biographies, strategic and tactical

studies, novels good and bad, works on political, diplomatic, economic, and social aspects, and many other relevant publications. Especially welcome to the Civil War bibliophile are the pictorial histories, combining pictures and narrative, and fulfilling a long-felt need for books of this type. Such older works as the ten-volume *Photographic History of the Civil War*, the unwieldy tomes published by *Harper's Weekly*, the Benson Lossing's *History of the Civil War* (with Mathew Brady photographs) are out of print, difficult to find, and (if found) sky-high in price.

The able "replacements" were ushered in by David Donald's *Divided We Fought*, published by Macmillan in 1953 and reviewed by William R. Keast in the March, 1956, issue of *Civil War History*. To this excellent work have been added two other pictorial histories, equally excellent: James D. Horan's *Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera* and the late Fletcher Pratt's *Civil War in Pictures*. All three volumes are enthusiastically recommended by this reviewer, along with a sobering footnote to the effect that good picture-books are necessarily expensive. These three volumes will relieve the purchaser of \$27.50 of his (I hope) hard-earned cash, but the dedicated collector — even the desperate collector — will be repaid far beyond that pecuniary appraisal.

Mr. Horan's indefatigable labors in assembling the materials of his book have resulted in a valuable double service to Civil War scholarship: an exciting account of Mathew Brady's life which, along with that of his nephew-by-marriage and inheritor Levin Handy, constitutes a history of the infancy, adolescence, and maturity of photography; and the still more exciting 138-page collection of Brady photographs, with major emphasis on the Civil War years. The story of Mr. Horan's research is too involved to recount here; he tells it himself, with admirable understatement, in his introductory pages. It need only be said that his task required infinite patience, tireless effort, and (admitted at last to a three-story building crammed with Brady-Handy photographs) an imposing problem of sorting, classifying, culling, and selecting the materials used in the book. The final result is highly praiseworthy. This reviewer mourns the absence of some vividly remembered prints in his long-lost copy of Lossing's *History*, but one can't have everything, and if the reader has by now put aside a \$27.50 budget for picture-books, he can well part with 27% of it for this volume.

One further note should be made concerning pictorial histories of the Civil War (such as *Divided We Fought* and *Mathew Brady*) which are based upon photographic evidence of that conflict. In the review cited above, Mr. Keast has already called attention to this point, but it bears repeating, to the effect of the "static" nature of all Civil War photographs. This inevitable effect is due, of course, to the "time-exposure" conditions of photography in the 1860's. Brady's genius has often surpassed this limitation, but the reader accustomed to the swift pace of historical narratives (such as Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants*, or Catton's fine trilogy on the Army of the Potomac, or Horan's *Confederate Agent*) must necessarily "slow down" in his expectations of the photographic record of the war. No reader will soon forget Brady's portraits of Clay, Calhoun, Sam Houston, Wade Hampton, John Winder, Lincoln, Grant, and a host of other leaders. In making his selections, Mr. Horan has wisely minimized the

battle scenes, which too often provide (referring again to Mr. Keast's review) "shots of serene battlefields empty of men, and pictures of these battlefields with men in the motionless attitudes of death. Too much of the war seems posed, and although we know the technical reasons for this, we miss the motion and commotion of battle."

This missing dimension, the visual dynamics of war, is well supplied in Fletcher Pratt's *Civil War in Pictures*, assembled "from the drawing boards of newspaper artists who recorded the conflict" for *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, among other outlets. Mostly anonymous, this corps of artists captured, in pen-and-ink sketches, the immediacy of the conflict, the deployments of battle, the frontal assaults, as well as more quiescent panoramic or limited scenes, with an authenticity of which the infant camera was then incapable of reproducing. The actual sensations of the war are thus more vibrantly communicated than by the photographic resources of that era — resources which have since, of course, attained the technical perfection which has given us unforgettable photographic records of the first and second World Wars. Therefore, for the student or collector who desires this visual immediacy, another sizable chunk of his \$27.50 budget (36%, no less) will be profitably invested in the late Mr. Pratt's superb collection. (As to the remaining 36%, I leave the budgetary reader to the recommendation of Mr. Keast's unadorned statement that *Divided We Fought* "should be a part of even the most modest Civil War library.")

Without detriment to Mr. Pratt's volume, which speaks for itself in terms of narrative and sketches, it should be noted that Mr. Horan's work is the more bibliographically complete, with source notes on the Brady-Handy photographs, a list of reference works, a pictorial bibliography of Brady pictures appearing in *Harper's* and *Leslie's* from 1860 to 1865, a picture index of this volume, and an index of the narrative portion. All such useful adjuncts are missing from *Civil War in Pictures*, but I do not resent their lack. In writing this review, my only regret is that Fletcher Pratt did not live to see these few words of praise. He well deserved them, and much more.

CHARLES T. MILLER

Allenspark, Colorado.

*Guns on the Western Waters: The Story of River Gunboats in the Civil War.* By H. Allen Gosnell. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1949. Pp. 273. \$6.50)

WITH A SERIES OF NEW BOOKS published or about to be published concerning naval activities on the western waters during the Civil War, this book of a few years ago merits reappraisal. It is a very readable work, and the author knows his naval history. Thus, when he opens his account with "The Gunboats and How They Fought," the reader can expect a concise and clear account of how these unique river crafts were used and just how effective they were. As Mr. Gosnell explains it, the very nature of a river restricted the

type of warfare in which gunboats could engage. Instead of the customary "engagements on parallel courses" so normal on the open seas, the struggle on the rivers was frequently between gunboats and forts or guns and ram. As he points out, "the fighting is likely to be over before two opponents can draw abreast of one another in narrow waters."

Each of the succeeding chapters is devoted to engagements and incidents along the inland waterways during the Civil War. From the story of "Pope's Run" at the Head of Passes to the account of the Red River expedition, the book is packed with the excitement and grim adventure of gunboat action. At the point where the Mississippi River branches off, called the Head of Passes, the Union had a collection of four vessels under Captain John Pope. They were the *Richmond*, a powerful sloop-of-war, the *Water Witch*, a side-wheel gunboat, and the *Preble* and *Vincennes*, also sloops-of-war. The *Water Witch* seemed to be the only suitable craft for the work ahead. On the night of October 11, 1861, the Confederate collection of men-of-war located up the river, under Commodore George N. Hollins, moved out to attack the Union blockade fleet. With skill they moved under cover of complete darkness and hit Pope's quartet with complete surprise. The flagship *Richmond* was rammed and quickly put out of the picture. The other ships dodged the fire rafts drifting toward them and withdrew down Southwest Pass. As in the case of other early engagements in the Civil War, "Pope's Run" was a series of confusing and confused happenings taking shape out of total inaction rather than by design. In a classic understatement, a naval authority of the time observed that the whole affair proved "to some extent humiliating to the service."

As the war progressed and as each side acquired more experience in the handling of naval equipment, the duels — both on land and on the rivers — became more grim and rugged. Aiding the army in its land movements, the gunboats were frequently called in to bombard fortifications. Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, and Island No. 10 were Union prizes obtained through the ready and efficient use of the gunboat fleet. A rough exchange below Fort Pillow proved to be another matter with the Confederate boats attacking and sinking the Federal *Cincinnati*.

At about this time the Army Ram Fleet came into existence under the command of Colonel Charles Rivers Ellet. In a letter to Secretary Stanton, the Colonel wrote about the rams then being fitted for action and explained that, even though these were not expressly designed for strength, it was rather "upon the audacity of our attack" that he relied for success. The resourceful and energetic Colonel did not arm his rams. At the Battle of Memphis, for example, there were no guns aboard the rams beyond a few carbines and pistols. The sole weapon of the ram, in his estimate, was the prow and the skill of its commander. With these two "weapons" he set out to prove his point and did so brilliantly.

Two chapters are devoted to the twenty-three day career of the Confederate gunboat *Arkansas*. In a fierce exchange with the Federal *Carondelet* the Confederate gunboat disabled her and then turned on the *Tyler*, which finally managed to escape but not before receiving a terrific pounding. Later, in a



battle with the *Essex*, the *Arkansas* ran ashore and was helpless under the steady gunfire of the Federal gunboat. Finally, when the situation looked quite hopeless, the Confederates set fire to their ship and saw her destroyed.

Mr. Gosnell's accounts of river action are highlighted by on-the-scene accounts written by participants or eye witnesses. Little details of the kind of naval warfare known during the Civil War recreate the individual incidents with a clarity rarely found in the more conventional histories. Although some of the battle scenes are somewhat gory, they tell a great deal about the conditions under which officers and crews of these uncomfortable crafts operated. Early in the book the author explains that many casualties were suffered as the result of splinters. While a shell might simply pass through the wooden structure of a ship the resulting splinters, hurled in all directions, did the heavy damage. The men who manned these iron-clad death traps were a rugged breed enduring not only the normal discomforts of life aboard such a craft but also the bloody chaos of combat.

Although other books on the naval story of the Civil War are in the offing, Mr. Gosnell's considered and superbly done study will remain a fitting shelf companion for the best of the lot.

ARNOLD GATES

Garden City, New York.

*Jubilee*. By John Brick. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company. 1956. Pp. 320. \$3.95.)

*Guns of Chickamauga*. By Richard O'Connor. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company. 1955. Pp. 288. \$3.95.)

*Leaps the Live Thunder*. By Garald Lagard. (New York: William Morrow and Company. 1955. Pp. 256. \$3.50.)

THESE THREE PIECES OF FICTION DEMONSTRATE that the Civil War is a very popular background for "adventure" writing these days, but not much else. *Jubilee* is the best of the three; it seems to have been conscientiously researched, and Mr. Brick is trying to say something important about a relatively complex man and the effect of the war upon him.

Jefferson Barnes is a West Pointer who realizes that the war is rugged business, and acts accordingly. The men of his upstate hometown New York regiment hate him for his fierce dedication to duty, political officers try to hamstring him for it, his new wife is first bewildered and then embittered by it. The regiment, inevitably, comes to love and respect him, as fictional outfits always come to love tough commanders; the political officers learn to respect him. His wife eventually comes to respect him, too, but no more; Mr. Brick is an honest writer, and there is no spun sugar for the ending. His hero's wife ends up with a man who is much better suited to her, and Jefferson Barnes finally dies in Sherman's last major action against Johnston.

The difficulty lies in the fact that nobody cares much. Few things are harder than writing about an unsympathetic protagonist; the reader feels

that Jefferson Barnes brings most of his problems on himself, and he lacks the stature which would make him a genuinely tragic and symbolic figure. There is a strong tendency to shrug when the Minié balls rip him apart.

Mr. Brick has a good eye for detail, a talent for description; he writes a good battle and a good family quarrel. He has, to the curious folk who are devoted to this period, what might be described rather lamely as a "feel for the War." He may write a very good book about it yet.

If the writers of the second and third works listed above have a feel for anything it is a feel for costume hokum. *Guns of Chickamauga* could be changed, with a simple alteration of words relating to clothes and weapons, to, say, *Trench Coats on Television*. There are these two fellows, see, and they love the same girl, only she chooses the Wrong one, who ends up as the commanding officer of the Good one and cashiers him unjustly, and the Good one then becomes a war correspondent and exposes a smuggling plot and it turns out he could have the girl back again, only she's not a good girl anymore, and — well, the Army of the Cumberland keeps getting in the way of all this, and one suspects that the writer was a little irritated to have to keep putting in a little something about it occasionally just because that's the title of his book.

*Leaps the Live Thunder* is about a Confederate cavalryman named Rackham Ballarol whose constant companion is a yellow tomcat named Colonel Turpentine. This cavalryman works for General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who apparently never lowered his voice during the entire war. The book tells how Rackham Ballarol spends all his time rescuing either Colonel Turpentine or the heroine—who has the dubious distinction of not being a tomcat—from the Yankees or their stooges. This would seem to make the work what is known in the book trade as a "juvenile," except that the tomcat (the most interesting character) drinks whisky, everybody uses dirty words, especially General Forrest, and the heroine keeps getting stripped to the waist or beyond for various reasons, most of them duller than one might think.

WILLIAM E. PORTER

Iowa City, Iowa

## THE TURTLE

Caesar, afloat with his fortunes!

And all the world agog

Straining its eyes

At a thing that lies

In the water, like a log!

It's a weasel! a whale!

I see its tail!

It's a porpoise! a polywog!

Tarnation! it's a *turtle*!

And blast my bones and skin,

My hearties sink her,

Or else you'll think her

A regular terror-pin!

The frigate poured a broadside!

The bombs they whistled well,

But — hit old Nick

With a sugar stick!

It didn't phase her shell!

*Piff*, from the creature's larboard—

And dipping along the water

A bullet hissed

From a wreath of mist

Into a Doodle's quarter!

*Raff*, from the creature's starboard—

*Rip*, from his ugly snorter,

And the Congress and

The Cumberland

Sunk, and nothing — shorter.

Now, here's to you, Virginia,

And you are bound to win!

By your rate of bobbing round

And your way of pitchin' in—

For you are a cross

Of the old sea-horse

And a regular terror-pin.

## *To Our Subscribers*

The Editors of CIVIL WAR HISTORY regret that the demand for copies of the first three issues of the magazine has been so heavy that our stock of them is exhausted, and that we do not know of any other source from which these issues might be obtained. The printing order has been increased, and we believe it will be possible to purchase single copies of the issues from now on.

Publication difficulties on the first issue of CIVIL WAR HISTORY have resulted in a delay of publication of subsequent issues. We are making efforts to correct this delay, and anticipate that within this year of publication the date on the magazine and the actual date of publication will be made to coincide. Meanwhile, we thank our subscribers for their patience in waiting for the magazine.

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